THE ST. JAMES'

SERIES.

REVENGE.

BY

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LONDON:
F. ENOS ARNOLD, 49, ESSEX STREET, STRAND.
1871.

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REVENGE.

CHAPTER I.

ST. JACQUES.

HAVE you ever been to St. Jacques, dear reader? if not, avoid it, for a more desolate dreary place does not exist, in the whole length and breadth of France, than this dismal little town.

Some would-be-eccentric fashionable London physician sent his patients to vegetate there, under the plea that the air was good for them; but although languid worn-out votaries of fashion flocked to St. Jacques in search of health, and, with the resignation of martyrs, tried to imagine that they enjoyed it, and derived benefit from its salubrious climate, they could not make it a fashionable watering-place, despite all their endeavours.

St. Jacques was a small irregularly built town on the northern coast of France; the scenery around was flat, and utterly devoid of vegetation, excepting the rows of tall poplars, which are always to be found all over France. It had, before the London doctor brought it into notice, derived its principal support from fishing; now, however, the little *auberge*, formerly called the "Lion d'Or," was dignified by the title of the "Hôtel de Londres," and St. Jacques began to lift its ugly little head and fancy itself growing into a place of importance.

Of course it had its chateau like all other French villages, but it was situated some little distance out of the town on one of the white straight roads bordered by the everlasting poplars. These French roads seem to be fit emblems of eternity, having no end. The proprietor, however, of the chateau had deserted it, and lived in Paris; his tumble-down habitation might have long ago gone to ruin had he not been so fortunate as to find a tenant for it. This inhabitant of the chateau was a continual topic of conversation with the good people of St. Jacques; there was a mystery about her (the occupier was a woman), and although she had been among them

several years, they were as much in the dark as to anything connected with the lady's affairs as ever; all they knew was that some eight years before this story opens, when St. Jacques was still unknown to fame, the little village was put in a state of excitement by the news that the chateau, which had stood empty for three years, was tenanted by a lady, two little girls about six or seven years old, and a middle-aged woman, evidently a domestic. They were not French, although the mistress and servant spoke the language very well. How, or when they arrived even, was unknown to the villagers; everything concerning them was wrapped in a cloak of mystery, which, although they had been eight years trying with all their might to penetrate, was as close as ever,—the sole information they were able to obtain being that the lady's name was Mrs. Horton, and that she was the mother of the two little girls—twins.

When St. Jacques became a quasi-fashionable place, the lady and her daughters confined themselves to their garden, until the last of the visitors left its shores, and then they resumed their long rambles on the sea coast. No matter how dull or cold the day, Mrs. Horton and her daughters might have

been seen, if there had been anyone to look, taking their accustomed walk by the grey sad sea. They never spoke to anybody, and only two or three people had ever seen the face of the elder lady, and that only by accident, when, coming upon her suddenly as she was sitting on a rock reading, they had caught a glimpse of her before she could draw down the thick veil she always wore. They said in that brief glance they had seen a face of great beauty, and too youthful looking to be the mother of those great girls. But as it was only men who had been fortunate enough to catch sight of the features of the mysterious lady, the female portion of the population did not attach much importance to their opinion with regard to the youth or beauty of the tenant of the chateau.

Many had been the baits held out to make the servant gossip a little, but it was of no avail; no temptation, however alluring, could induce the woman to throw the slightest light on the lady's affairs, so the good people had with reluctance given up the bribing of the servant, though they speculated and wondered all the more.

It was an afternoon late in October, and all

the visitors had departed from St. Jacques except one solitary stranger who still lingered in the dull little town, much to the satisfaction of the hostess of the "Lion d'Or," (I beg her pardon the "Hôtel de Londres") whose hospitable roof sheltered him. What he found attractive in St. Jacques would have appeared strange to any person, except one of the townspeople, who were so inflated with the prosperity of their native place, as to imagine it quite possible that the stranger was most unwilling to tear himself away from the contemplation of its flat sandy shore, and dusty white roads.

"Well, Monsieur," said the hostess, who was making one of a group outside the inn door, on this identical afternoon—for now that all the visitors were gone, St. Jacques had again settled down into its natural state of quietude, and discussed its own and its neighbours' affairs at the corners of the street, or wherever it found it most convenient; and Madam Duval, the proprietress of the hotel, who was as fond of enlightening her mind with her neighbours' business as the generality of her class, formed the centre of a group at her door.—"Well, Monsieur, I cannot help thinking that there is something very odd

about Madame at the chateau; if not, why this secrecy? It's eight years now since she came here, dropped from the sky, one might almost say; and although I have asked Madame Jacqueline, in a friendly way, to a 'petit souper' at least twenty times, she has never as much as opened her mouth about Madame, her mistress. It is very strange, Monsieur Robert, to say the least of it."

"Certainly it is," replied the man addressed as Monsieur Robert, a small, thin, wiry-looking Frenchman, who held the important office of butcher to the community of St. Jacques, "if she found it possible to withstand Madame's fascinations," he added, with a bow. "But talk of Le Diable, and he appears, and there see if it be not Madame and her two daughters going to take their walk, now all the visitors are gone."

"Yes, but all have not left; the English Monsieur is still here," said Madame Duval, with an air of pride, as though the stranger were staying on her account, "and he has gone that way to walk too. What if he knows Madame! He asked several questions this morning about the chateau and who lived there. But I must not stay longer gossiping,

for I have Monsieur's dinner to prepare;" so the little group separated.

We will now follow the three tall figures in dark grey waterproof cloaks, who were making their way to the sea beach. Having, after walking about a mile, come to a sheltered nook in the rocks, the three sat down. The elder woman drew aside the thick veil she wore and disclosed a face of most remarkable beauty; she might have been about thirty-three or four, but hers was a style of beauty that developes itself late in life and is retained to an advanced age. She was tall, perhaps some would have thought too tall for a woman, but then her figure was perfect, even seen under the disadvantage of her grey loose cloak; her forehead was high, broad, and white as marble, her nose straight and finely chiselled, her mouth and chin perfect; but her crowning beauty was her golden hair, not red or flaxen, but the pure gold that is so rare even now in these days of Auricomus. The only defect in this wonderfully lovely face was the grey eyes; these same eyes were too light, and had a shifting look in them, which told a story of their own, and bade the beholders beware of their possessor. The two girls who accompanied her were fac-similes of each

other, and easy to be recognised at a glance as her daughters; the same tall figures, but they had not yet come to her glorious proportions; also their features were cast in the same mould as hers, but compared to her they looked like pale stars beside the moon. They were pretty interesting-looking girls, but they gave promise of being splendid beautiful women. There was one advantage, however, they possessed, they had not the grey steely eyes of their mother: theirs were dark blue. It was almost impossible to tell the girls apart, except for a scar, that, although now healed and almost imperceptible, still showed on the broad white forehead of one when she was under the influence of any emotion, making a thin red line across the brow and nearly dividing one of the pencilled eyebrows. It must have been an awful blow that left that mark, slight as it was; to-day the cold wind had brought it out more strongly than usual, and the elder woman frowned slightly as her eye fell on it.

"Lola," she said, rather sharply, "put down your veil, that scar seems to get redder and redder as you grow older."

"Poor Lola," said the other girl, as she

clasped the hand of her sister, "it is not her fault, mamma."

"Really, Louie, I do not see any reason why you should take up your sister's defence before there is any reason for it. I did not say the disagreeable mark was Lola's fault, and was merely lamenting its prominence for her sake."

"Well, I do not see much what it matters," said Lola, as she pulled her veil down, "for we never see anyone, and if we are to live here all our lives it will be just the same, whether it goes away or remains, except that it prevents my being taken for Louie, which if a large estate depended on it would be good for you, darling, as you are half an hour older than I; but as it is it saves Jacqueline getting confused over us, and even you, too, mamma, in spite of its ugliness—but hark! there's some one coming."

Before Mrs. Horton could pull her veil over her features, a young man about three-and-thirty stood beside them.

"My God! can it be possible!" he exclaimed as his eyes fell on the elder woman, who had risen, and stood white and trembling before him. The girls looked with wonder, first at their mother and then at the stranger,

but in a minute Mrs. Horton had regained her self-possession. "I have not the honour of knowing you," she said in French. A sinister smile passed over the features of the man as he bowed and apologised for his mistake.

"Pardon me, Madame, but the resemblance you bear to a dear friend I once knew misled me. I see now that I was mistaken, besides, my friend has been dead several years. Good day, ladies," and, raising his hat, he passed on.

"Come, girls, we will go home," said Mrs. Horton when the stranger was out of sight. "I am tired and cold."

So the three walked with swift steps towards the town. Some five minutes after Mrs. Horton and her daughters had left the sea-shore, the stranger who had so singularly accosted them, returned and took his seat on the boulder which had served Mrs. Horton for a resting place. "Not dead, after all!" he said, with a little chuckle. "The acting of 'I don't know you' was superb; but there was no mistaking that face and figure; by Jove, she's handsomer than ever! What's her little game, I wonder? Revenge? Well whatever it is we must row in the same boat, my fair Pauline! What a lucky chance that led me

to this dog hole! Phew! it's cold enough to freeze a wolf by these sad sea waves, and as the joyful rencounter has given me an appetite, I will return to my quarters, and see what kind of a dinner my hostess has provided."

This man was not bad-looking. He was tall with a good slim figure, and a pale aristocratic face; his mouth was coarse and sensual looking, but it was almost hidden by a red moustache beard and whiskers; it was a face with no particular expression except listlessness as a rule, but to-day there was a baneful smile over his features that made it sinister in the extreme. In spite of the cold of which he had been complaining, he strolled leisurely towards the "Lion d'Or" and mounted to his chamber, which was the best room in the house, but pervaded by a mixed odour of stale cigar smoke, whiffs of garlic, and the smell of departed dinners, so well known to travellers who have inhabited hotels in provincial towns on the Continent. The Englishman was fastidious, it would seem, by the impatient manner in which he opened the window and let in the cold damp air.

"What an abominable smell!" he said. "I wonder how people can live in such an atmosphere, but it is worth putting up with for the

good luck that has fallen to me to-day." His toilet completed, he descended to the salle-à-manger, where his dinner awaited him. There was a long table going down the whole length of the room, but as he was the sole diner, his chair was placed near the stove, at one end. The potage was good indeed, and the dinner altogether better than anyone would have expected, proving that, however deficient in some homely comforts our lively neighbours may be, the fault of bad cookery cannot be ranked among their failings. Dinner having come to a conclusion, it is high time that the Englishman should be introduced by name to the reader. Mr. Harold Allen—for that was the cognomen by which he was entered in the visitors' book at the Hôtel de Londres ; so by that name, for the present, we will call him—drew his chair close up to the stove, lit a cigar, and prepared to make himself comfortable.

CHAPTER II.

THE UNWELCOME VISITOR.

THE Chateau St. Jacques was one of those ugly queer dilapidated buildings such as are rarely seen in England now-a-days, but are to be met with frequently on the Continent. The interior, though far from comfortable, was much better than would have been gathered from the dull dreary exterior, which looked on to the flat uninteresting road. It was very large and rambling, with steps in all sorts of unlikely places, put there seemingly for no other purpose than to break the legs or necks of the unwary. The furniture was in keeping with the house, odd, and fast going to decay. The beds were gaunt erections with nodding plumes in which generations of the Comtes de St. Jacques had given up the ghost. The garden was old and time-honoured, like everything else in "this desirable family resi-

dence," with a very high brick wall surround-it, its ugliness covered by fruit trees of many years' growth—for in French chateaux the useful is combined with the ornamental and they are preferred to the more charming but useless creepers—there were sheltered nooks, a maze, a green sluggish pond, dignified with the name of lake, and a Chinese pagoda in the centre, built evidently for the accommodation of antiquated and respectable rats and their families; the paths were grass-grown, the shrubs had become large trees, but for all that it was a pleasant garden in some respects, and Louie and Lola Horton spent most of their time in it. I must not omit the mention of an old tumble-down summer-house, for it was a great place of resort with the sisters. There in summer weather they would go and learn their lessons, or take their work. Now, however, it was getting almost too cold for their favourite retreat, and they had to keep to the house.

On the night after the encounter on the sands, Mrs. Horton and her daughters were together in the sitting-room of the chateau, a low-ceilinged room with dark panels and heavy furniture; huge faggots cracked and sparkled in the large wide-mouthed chimney,

lighting up the sombre room; now casting strange flickering shadows of fantastic shape on the walls, now bringing out in strong relief the three golden heads. Mrs. Horton, seen in the rising and falling light, was like some beautiful vision; a dressing-gown of light blue stuff, girded in at the waist with a cord and tassel, contrasted and harmonized well with her delicate white complexion and yellow hair; she was sitting in a low chair, gazing into the wood embers as though she could read the future in the glowing, crumbling mass. The two girls were at the further end of the room seated at a table poring over the same book by the feeble light of a small lamp; they, too, looked to far greater advantage without the disfiguring grey waterproofs, and the scar on fair Lola's brow was scarcely perceptible; they made a sweet picture—these young twin sisters. A very acute observer would have noticed that Lola's face was more full of energy than her sister's, that her eyes were less tender than Louie's, while there were faint lines round her delicate mouth, young as she was, that betokened a determined nature.

At last Mrs. Horton awoke from her

reverie. "Lola and Louie," she said, "play me a duet."

The girls rose at once, and took their place at a very handsome modern piano, which looked strangely out of place in the old-fashioned apartment; they played well, with feeling and execution, showing they had been taught thoroughly, and yet their sole teacher was their mother. The middle of a most intricate passage had been reached, when the door opened and a middle-aged, harsh-featured woman entered.

"What is it, Jacqueline?" inquired her mistress.

"It is a gentleman, and he says he must see you."

Mrs. Horton turned pale with indignation.

"*Must* see me? and did you not say that I received no one?"

"I told him that, but he said you would see him he knew."

"What impudence! Tell him to go away. Yet, stay, on second thoughts, I had better hear what he wants. He recognised me then," muttered the woman to herself, while the two girls, who had left off playing, were waiting with wonder and astonishment de-

picted on their countenances at such an unheard-of thing as a visitor.

Mr. Harold Allen was ushered into the room, and advanced to greet Mrs. Horton; but a quick look warned him of the presence of the girls, and he took his cue accordingly. Slight as the glance had been between them, it did not escape the sharp eyes of Lola, who wondered at it and drew therefrom the not unreasonable conclusion that her mother and the stranger had met before, and a smile passed over her face as the gentleman apologised for the intrusion, but pleaded his loneliness at the wretched little hotel in excuse for his visit to utter strangers. "I have heard so much about French hospitality," he said, "and I was so miserable that I summoned up courage to come here, thinking that there might be some of my own sex, who would perhaps take pity on my isolation, and forgive my intrusion; but I see I am intruding on you ladies, so I will withdraw." These words were accompanied with a glance this time from the stranger, which did not pass unnoticed by Lola, as he made a movement as though intending to leave.

"No, Monsieur, we shall be very much pleased if you will remain an hour or so, as

you *are* here," said Mrs. Horton. "We do not receive visitors, it is true, because I am a widow and my daughters are not yet out of the schoolroom, but I cannot refuse your request to make one of our little circle for this evening, although I fear you will find little to amuse you in our society."

The stranger bowed, and expressed his delight and appreciation of the amiability of Mrs. Horton, and took a seat near the fire. He tried his best to be amusing, but Lola saw that her mother was deadly pale. Mr. Allen was most particularly attentive to his hostess, but that did not prevent his looking at the young girls. Louie's gentle, placid face seemed to please him most, although his eye lingered oftener on the more resolute countenance of Lola; the unwonted excitement had brought out the thin red scar, which looked in the firelight like a streak of blood.

More lights had been brought in by Jacqueline, but the room was so large and dark that the part where the sisters sat remained comparatively in shadow.

There was something about Lola that disconcerted Mr. Allen; look up when he would he felt certain he should encounter the girl's

eyes fixed on him; although he could not account for it, he felt uncomfortable under her gaze, and was glad when the simple supper of chocolate and biscuits had been served, thereby relieving him from the presence of Lola and her sister, who retired to their room, leaving him alone with their mother.

"We are alone at last," said the man as the door closed on the retreating forms of the girls. "I never felt so uncomfortable in my life as in the presence of that daughter of yours with the scar. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Horton (that is the name, I believe, you wish to go by), for being so familiar, but we are old friends you know."

"Hush! for God's sake! Lola already suspects something, and should she get a clue, however slight, she would never rest until she had discovered all; then it would be but little mercy I should get at her hands, for somehow or other the girl hates me, I believe," said Mrs. Horton. "We cannot talk here, I will let you know in a day or so where to meet me, without danger, and then I will tell you all, for it is I see impossible to pretend to you."

The man smiled a self-satisfied smile, and

took up his hat. "Very well," he said, "I will leave you now, but I shall await your communication with impatience; good night, I am glad you see it in the light, that it is better for us to be friends at last."

When Mrs. Horton was left alone, her lovely face became positively diabolical in its altered expresion.

"Not caught yet, Mr. Allen, as you call yourself," she hissed after his retreating figure; "you little know the woman you have to deal with."

A slight noise caused her to turn her head, and there stood her daughter Lola. The girl started with horror at the sight of her mother's face.

"Why, mamma, what is the matter?" she asked. "Are you ill? I only came down, as I heard the gates shut, and therefore knew you were alone, to ask for your smelling salts, because Louie has a bad headache."

"I will come with you and see what it is that ails your sister," said Mrs. Horton, the evil expression banishing as if by magic. Yet Lola had seen it, and her young heart was filled with a fear and dread, which caused her many sleepless nights, and was not rendered

less terrible, from the fact that she could not account for such forebodings. But we must leave her for the present and pass over to England, where some more individuals, who will figure conspicuously in this story, are awaiting an introduction to the reader.

CHAPTER III.

WESTON PARK.

IN one of the midland counties of England stood a fine modern-built mansion in a beautifully wooded park. Everything around the estate gave evidences of wealth and taste; the gardens were well kept, and no sign of carelessness or poverty was to be seen on the property, everything was in thorough repair, and peace and plenty seemed to have taken up their abode at Weston Park. These broad acres belonged to Sir Herbert Weston, second baronet of that name; he was not one of the old county families, the first baronet, father of Sir Herbert, had been the founder of the family and fortune; he was proud of his success, and never weary of telling all around him that he was a self-made man. The second son of a county attorney, he had shown great ability, became a barrister, and worked his

way up to wealth and honour. When between forty and fifty he had married the penniless daughter of an earl, and built this mansion. He had two sons by this marriage, the present possessor of the title and estate, and another following the profession of his father. The old man and his wife had been summoned to their last account some years, and Herbert and his wife reigned instead. He was a fine-looking man about thirty-eight or nine years of age, with an open honest face, which at once gained the confidence of every man, woman, child, and dog with whom he came into contact. He was married, and the father of the greatest little pickle in the United Kingdom.

Master Wilfred (named after his grandfather) was about six years old, the idol of his parents, and the terror of his nursemaids.

Lady Weston was a sweet-looking woman some five or six years younger than her husband. It had been a love match, and now, after seven years of matrimony, they were as ardent lovers as when they first plighted their troth. But for all this, Sir Herbert had not always been the happy, proud man he was now. In his youth he had married—so rumour said—a beautiful girl, below him in the

social scale. The union had been a secret one, and Sir Herbert (plain Mr. Weston at that time, for his father was alive) had bitterly repented his infatuation for a pretty face, even before the honeymoon waned. While still a benedict in secret, he had met Isobel Lawson at a ball and fallen in love with her; she returned his passion, and refused everyone for his sake, wondering why he did not offer her his hand. At last an accident set him free; his wife was drowned, and then Mr. Weston told Isobel the story of his life, and asked her to marry him. She complied, and one year after the death of his unacknowledged wife, Herbert Weston led to the altar his real love.

His father had never any suspicion of his son's secret marriage, in fact no one knew of that dark page in his life except his brother Roland, who had been his confidant all along. Now life seemed to present the fairest prospects for him; he had a wife who grew dearer and dearer as the years passed on, a beautiful high-spirited boy, and a fine large unencumbered estate. Surely if ever man had his share of this world's goods, Sir Herbert had. Notwithstanding, there was often a shade on his honest brow.

The autumnal tints were stealing over the

trees in the park, turning the leaves into the most gorgeous red and gold; the thick ferns were beginning to lose their brilliant green, assuming that rich and varied hue which betokens the fall of the year; the slaughter of the innocents had commenced, and delicate nerves were continually being startled by the reports of the sportsmen's guns. Sir Herbert was very fond of shooting indeed; he was a lover of all out-door sports, and always filled his house at this season of the year with kindred spirits.

The day's sport is over, and Sir Herbert is wending his way back to the house with his guests, when he makes his first bow to the reader. Fancy a tall broad-shouldered man, with bright auburn hair and beard, snow-white teeth, fearless, honest, dark blue eyes, with a kindly tender expression, and you have the portrait of Sir Herbert Weston. He has three companions, one Captain Lawson, his wife's brother, a good-looking man about thirty; a neighbouring squire, and a Mr. Maxwell, a tall, thin, dark young fellow, very silent and reserved, but withal a great favourite of Sir Herbert and his wife. He is a lawyer, and a friend of Roland Weston, Herbert's brother.

"Well, Maxwell, it's strange Roland did

not come with you; it does not seem like shooting season without Roley, so fond as he is too of popping at the birds. I wish he would put aside business for a while; what is the good of his slaving as he does, he has neither wife or child to provide for, and what's more I don't think he ever will marry. But here we are, and there's Isobel waiting for us," said Sir Herbert, as he ran with most lover-like speed to greet his wife, whose slight figure was visible on the terrace in the twilight.

"There goes Weston," said Squire Hilton; "never saw such a couple in my life, one would think that they had been married only seven weeks, instead of that number of years. I wonder Roley is not so fascinated with the sight of his brother's happiness, that he does not rush into matrimony also."

"Report says that Sir Herbert won the only woman he cared for," said Mr. Maxwell.

Captain Lawson frowned at the allusion, but he replied, "Yes, there was some stupid talk about Roland caring for Isobel, but I am sure there was no foundation for it on my sister's side, and whatever Roland felt has long ago passed away, for he is the best of friends with both Sir Herbert and his wife."

The house being reached by this time, conversation was at an end, each one going a separate way, preparing to dress for dinner, so no further mention was made on the subject.

Dinner passed off as it generally does at country houses in the shooting season, the principal topic of conversation being the number of birds bagged and the different opinions as to the sport, whether it was better or worse than the year before, etc., etc.

Lady Weston and Miss Cross, a young old lady, who held the position of something between companion to the gentle lady of the house and governess to Master Wilfred, retired to the drawing-room, leaving the gentlemen to their wine. It was a lovely moonlight night, and the park looked so sweet and peaceful in the pale placid light, that Lady Weston stepped out of the drawing-room window on to the terrace.

"I am going for a little walk," she said. "If Herbert comes up, Miss Cross, tell him I shall be back in a few moments; I am only going as far as the 'Fairy Dell,'" and so saying, she drew a shawl over her head and walked off.

The "Fairy Dell" was a beautiful little hollow in the park, surrounded by tall fir

trees, graceful copper beeches and stalwart oaks, interlaced and festooned with masses of ivy, the growth of many years; there the wild hyacinths, ferns, and bluebells might be found growing in rich luxuriance on a mossy bed, whilst the delicate blue forget-me-not raised its tiny flowers on the edge of a rivulet which ran through this part like a shining silver thread. It was Lady Weston's favourite walk, and lay about a quarter of a mile distant from the Hall itself. With her white dress fluttering among the trees, and the moon's rays on her sweet face, she would have passed for the queen of the elfin sprites going to hold her court in the dell, for she was very fair, this wife of Sir Herbert's; time had dealt leniently with her, and though in reality some two or three years over thirty, she might have passed for eight or ten years younger. She had one of those sylph-like little figures, full of grace in every movement; a small, elegantly-shaped head, with masses of jet-black hair coiled into a heavy knot at the back of the head, a low broad forehead, sweet loving brown eyes, set rather far apart, and a delicately formed mouth, with rosy red lips—altogether a most piquante little face with its rich brunette complexion, and withal a face to

trust, honest, fearless, kind, and true, and her face did not belie her character; she was a true woman, impulsive, warm-hearted, quick-tempered, but courageous, tender, and open as the day. No wonder that all with whom she came in contact loved her, she was worthy of affection, and she was a woman, who, once loved, could not be easily forgotten.

When, some half-hour later, Lady Weston returned to the house, she was pale and nervous; her husband, who had just entered the drawing-room noticed it, and at once went up to her.

"Why, ma belle, you look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Herbert, come with me into the conservatory, and if you promise not to laugh I will tell you what I have seen."

Having given the desired promise, Sir Herbert, whose curiosity was aroused, followed his wife in silence.

"Now, Herbert, as we are alone listen to me. I am superstitious you know, but I am not a coward: to-night when I went to the 'Fairy Dell' I was thinking of you and your love, when I looked up, and there on the other side of the stream I saw Roland deadly pale with blood on his head, but he seemed to dis-

appear directly he saw me looking at him, and although I searched everywhere about, I could find no trace of anyone."

"My darling," said Sir Herbert, caressing the small head, "you must not give way to fancies like this, Roland is all right; most likely he will be down the end of the week. Why, who should hurt him? and why should he go to the 'Fairy Dell' of all places? No, depend upon it, pet, it was your imagination, so come in and let us have some music, and that will dispel this nightmare."

Lady Weston did as her husband wished, but although she was silent she held her own opinion.

CHAPTER IV.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

ST. JACQUES was in the greatest state of excitement. The English stranger had disappeared most mysteriously; he had gone out in the dusk of the evening the night before and had never returned. Some fishermen walking along the rocks said they heard a man's voice and a woman's talking, and then a scream, but they paid no attention to it. Now, however, that the stranger had not come back, everybody had some wonderful idea about it.

Monsieur Pomeroy, the chemist, who was very romantic, and a little fat podgy man with a red face, believed most strongly in the grand passion; he had no doubt it was an "*affaire de cœur.*" "Had not the fishermen said they heard a woman's voice; very likely some female whom Monsieur had loved, had

followed him and they had died together." This was all very charming, but not very practical.

Then Monsieur Alexandre, the hair-dresser and barber, a dark cadaverous-looking man, attributed the Englishman's disappearance to politics; this barber was the red republican of St. Jacques; he was very red, believed in nothing less than a good rattling revolution, with "every-man-equal-and-I'll-be-your-king" sort of business; he used to smack his lips at the recital of the good old days when the national barber reigned in France, and make his hearers' blood run cold by his graphic description of the glories of the reign of terror. He had a strong conviction that Monsieur Allen had been entrapped by the tyrants (all the powers that were, were tyrants in Monsieur Alexandre's eyes) and killed.

This supposition was also interesting, but, like Monsieur Pomeroy's, rather unlikely. It was evident he had not run away to avoid paying his bill, because he had left his portmanteau behind, and that seemed full, by its weight; besides there were several little trinkets, such as a set of studs and a scarf pin, which in themselves were enough to pay the good lady of the Hôtel de Londres. No, he

had met with some foul play, undoubtedly, but why or wherefore was unknown.

"Depend upon it, Citoyenne Duval," said Monsieur Alexandre (he scorned to call anyone Monsieur or Madame), "Citoyen Allen has been an agent in the glorious cause, he looked like a friend of liberty, and he has been tracked and murdered by these wretches, who would grind the people down. Is not this enough to make every true patriot's blood boil?"

"Come, Monsieur Alexandre, you will get into trouble if you talk so much; besides what has the Englishman to do with us or liberty? for my part, I choose to remain as we are; it's all very well this 'liberty, equality, and fraternity,' but I like to keep my head on my shoulders," said Monsieur Robert, the butcher, "and in the good old days, as you call them, they had a very disagreeable habit of taking a friend's head occasionally to make up the number to supply the 'National Barber,' and I am not good enough, Citoyen, to prefer the glory of France to my own life, even if I were sure that another 'reign of terror' was the way to gain it."

"Reign of terror, Citoyen Robert? reign of

liberty, glorious liberty, when the people, the mighty people, governed France."

"Yes, and a precious mess they made of it," growled Monsieur Blanc, the baker. "I hope it will never come in my lifetime."

"Citoyen Blanc, I blush for you; will you be one of the supporters of tyranny against the tree of liberty, whose roots should strike down into the hearts of all brave men?"

"Stuff and rubbish, Monsieur Alexandre. You who are so great an advocate for the people's rights, why not stick up for your own?"

This speech raised a great laugh against the barber, because, in spite of all his ferocious opinions, he was the meekest of hen-pecked husbands, Madame, his wife, being an absolute monarch. Perhaps it was this home tyranny that created in him such a feverish desire for liberty abroad.

"But all this time we have not got any nearer the knowledge of what has become of the Englisher," continued Monsieur Blanc. "Has anybody given notice to the police? No! Well, then, I will go at once and do it myself, and then we most likely shall find out what really is the cause of the gentleman's disappearance."

This was such a sensible idea that everybody was astonished (as everybody usually is in such cases), that nobody had thought of it before.

In the midst of all the conflicting opinions, Jacqueline, from the chateau, walked in to order some wine. She listened with a grim smile to M. Pomeroy's story, and laughed outright at M. Alexandre's suggestion, much to that worthy mán's disgust.

"Most likely the gentleman has gone coasting, and will come back or send for his luggage in a few days."

Jacqueline's short speech, delivered with a contemptuous air, as though the man in question was quite beneath her notice, threw a new light upon the subject, much to the hairdresser's discomfiture, who clung to his pet idea of tyrants, and could not bear to be put down like that—especially before such an audience—without a struggle; therefore, assuming an imposing air, he thus spoke:

"Citoyenne Jacqueline, I would it were so, but I know the world too well, and the unscrupulousness of tyrants, to accept your version."

"And why is my version any more unlikely than yours?" replied Jacqueline, with a sneer.

"Was it necessary that the English Monsieur should inform you where he was going when he came to you to be shaved? I may not know the world so well, or be versed in the way of tyrants like the Citoyen Alexandre, but I do not think it the mode for gentlemen to make confidants of the barber of every little village they visit," and with this parting thrust Jacqueline left the Hôtel de Londres.

"What a very disagreeable woman that is!" said Alexandre, when his opponent had departed out of ear-shot. "But you saw how I beat down all her arguments," looking around him with importance. "I did not leave her a leg to stand on. She was obliged to go."

"I don't know about that; it seemed to me that Madame Jacqueline got the best of it," said M. Robert, "and I think the idea very good. Why should not the gentleman go for a sail if he likes? The English, I've heard, almost live on the water, and no wonder, because they have such a little foggy island. But suppose we have a glass of wine all round to the gentleman's safe return; I will pay."

Messieurs Alexandre and Pomeroy had no objection to the wine, though they shook their

heads dolefully, and would not entertain for a moment such a common-place solution of the stranger's disappearance. One glass of wine became two, and two increased to three, and then, to Monsieur Alexandre's sorrow, it was time to leave, and each departed to his house.

As the barber approached nearer his domicile, his courage ebbed lower and lower; there was no help for it, so striving to put a bold face on, he tried the handle of the door, but it was fastened, and he knew Madame was furious. After repeatedly knocking, he was admitted by a little sharp-faced, shrewish-looking woman.

"So you have come at last," she exclaimed, in a vixenish tone, "and you've been spending your money at the 'Lion d'Or' instead of being at home like a good husband. I wish the national barber you're so fond of talking about had the shaving of you, I do, you wretch! Don't stand looking at me in that idiotic way, but go to bed at once," screamed the little virago.

Resistance Alexandre knew would be useless; so the ferocious red republican, the advocate of liberty, sought his couch (anything but a bed of roses to him) like the most crest-fallen and cowardly of curs.

When Jacqueline left the "Lion d'Or," her face wore a puzzled look. "Can she have anything to do with his disappearance, I wonder," she muttered. "It seems strange; I must keep my ears and eyes open—but no, she would never do that, and yet I don't know either, because she can be like the very devil himself when she is roused; if she has she should not keep it from me, and she shall not. I have helped her in dark hours before, and so I would again, but she must have no secrets from me."

With this strange speech, Jacqueline reached the chateau. Mrs. Horton was sitting by the fire in the dark panelled room, dressed in the same blue dressing-gown as she wore when we last saw her. A book was in her hand, but she seemed far more interested in her own thoughts, for her eyes had not glanced once at the pages of the novel for the space of half-an-hour. It was a wet drizzling evening, so Louie and Lola were indoors, in the same room, at a table drawing, but the dark eyes of Lola were every now and then directed towards the thoughtful face of Mrs. Horton.

Jacqueline came in to announce dinner, and

awoke her mistress from the reverie by the following words:—

"There is strange news in the town, Madame," she said. "The Englishman who came here the other night has disappeared, no one knows how or where."

Lola started at the news, and fixed her eyes on her mother's face. Was it fancy, or did Mrs. Horton really turn pale? Lola thought she did.

"The Englishman disappeared!" exclaimed Louie; "most likely he has got tired of this dreadfully dull place, and gone away. How happy I should be to leave!"

"Would you, Louie?" said Mrs. Horton, quickly. "Are you and Lola not happy here? because I live but for my children, and if you are miserable here, however repulsive it might be to my feelings, I will take you elsewhere."

"I am sure, mamma, dear Louie would rather stay here than cause you pain."

Mrs. Horton looked anything but pleased at this dutiful speech from her daughter Lola, although she thanked her, and kissed her white forehead.

"She does know something about the stranger," thought Jacqueline, who had been a

spectator of the scene, "and that girl suspects the same."

Mrs. Horton did not eat much supper that night, and retired to her room as soon as it was over, with the plea of a bad headache. Her bedroom was, like all the other apartments in the house, large and gloomy, but there were more evidences of comfort here; a large comfortable easy-chair, a reading-desk and lamp, and a soft carpet, took off a little of the sombreness.

Mrs. Horton had not been in her room many minutes before Jacqueline came to light the fire for her; she shut the door and then fastened it. After this strange proceeding, she went and placed her hand on her mistress's shoulder.

"Pauline," she said, "what have you done with that man?"

The younger woman grew pale under the steady gaze. "What man?" she asked.

"Pauline, what is the good of acting to me? Have I not perilled my life, and, what is worse, my soul for you? Yes; you may smile; my soul, for I believe in a hereafter. Oh! my darling, have I not been true to you through all? and will again, come what may. But you must be open with me; that is the

least you can do. Tell me what have you done with the man?"

"What do you think?" said the younger woman, with an attempt at a smile; it was a very ghastly one, and suddenly she broke into a passionate fit of sobbing.

"Hush! hush! or Lola may hear you, and that girl begins to suspect something already."

"I know she does," replied Pauline, by a great effort conquering her emotion. "Listen, Jacqueline, I have paid my first instalment of the debt; do not ask me any more now, dear; I wish to be alone."

Jacqueline stood a moment, regarding the golden head bowed down on the table by which Mrs. Horton was sitting with a sad dreary look on her hard features, and then turned and left the room.

"It is as I thought. Oh, God! when will this life of agony cease? Beauty, beauty, what a curse it is!"

"Why, Jacqueline?" said Lola, who was coming up-stairs, and had overheard the woman's speech.

Jacqueline turned sharply to the girl.

"What are you doing here? You ought to be ashamed of yourself listening and prying about as you do; I don't know what has come

to you. But it was not your beauty I was lamenting, at any rate, Miss Lola,—that will never be a burden to you with that scar across your face."

The girl turned pale as death at the allusion to the mark, and a dangerous glitter came into her eyes. "I will pay you, some day, for this, Jacqueline, never fear, and you need not tell me your secrets, I will find them out." And with these words she walked away.

Jacqueline looked after the graceful figure of the young girl, as she went to join her sister, and shook her head.

"Can it be possible that she and Louie are sisters—one almost an angel, the other only requiring the opportunity to develope into a devil?"

Jacqueline was wrong; Louie certainly was almost an angel, but Lola was very far off from being a devil—she was only a clever, suspicious, proud, sensitive girl at present; what she will become, time alone will show. She had strong passions both for good and evil; we shall see which will gain the victory in the future.

CHAPTER V.

PAYING OFF OLD SCORES.

"I SAY, Jim, he looks to me as if he would become fishes' food, after all."

"Not he," replied the man addressed as Jim. "Reptiles take a lot of killing." It was on the deck of a small vessel where the discussion was taking place, and the object of it was lying insensible—his head, from which the blood was flowing, pillowed on an old sail; "but lend us a helping hand to stop this bleeding."

"Here comes the Captain, he'll tell us what we'd better do with him."

"Take him into my cabin," said a deep voice; "and then put on all sail, and run for the cove; we must get this stowed away:" and he indicated the wounded man with his foot.

The senseless man was laid in the Captain's

berth, his head bandaged up, and then left to come to or not, just as Nature pleased, for all hands were busy crowding sail.

The vessel flew over the waters like a bird, and in about two hours entered a little cove.

It was very dark, and a drizzling rain kept falling, rendering the air cold and raw, and obscuring the outline of the coast to a dangerous degree.

The vessel was expected; a signal, like the cry of a sea-gull, was repeated three times, and then all hands were actively engaged running the cargo ashore, but the wounded man was not forgotten, although left until the last. No longer unconscious, but weak and scarcely able to speak from the loss of blood he had sustained, he was carried, wondering, on shore, into a large cave full of goods, which had been quickly brought from the boat, and another cargo as quickly shipped, everything being done in perfect silence. He looked at the strange scene around him, at the dusky figures in the cavern flitting to and fro by the light of the torches, and asked himself what it all meant.

At length the last bale and cask were stowed away, and two men, in obedience to one who seemed their captain, took him up,

and carried him through what to him appeared interminable passages to a small room cut in the rock; here he was deposited on a heap of old tarpaulins, and his conductors left him with the man who had been giving instructions and orders all along, and whose face he had now leisure to examine.

There was a lamp slung from the ceiling which lit up every corner of the cabin, and shone full on the two men. One was a very tall, stalwart figure, with a face of marvellous beauty, although much bronzed and weather-beaten from exposure; his age might be anything from twenty-five to thirty-five, his beard was bright yellow and curling, the same as his hair, which clustered thickly round his noble-looking forehead; altogether he was a magnificent specimen of manhood, with the strength of a Hercules. The other the reader is already acquainted with, being the stranger of the "Lion d'Or."

The two men regarded each other for some moments in silence; at last Mr. Allen, with a look of bewilderment, putting his hand to his head, spoke, "What is the meaning of this? how came I here?"

"How came you here? Well, before I answer that question, look at me, and see if

you recognise me. Ah! I thought you would when you came to yourself. I have saved your worthless life, but you will be dead to the world for a time, perhaps for ever."

At this dreadful threat Mr. Allen threw himself on his knees before the man, exclaiming, "No, no, you cannot mean that you will keep me a prisoner here. I will swear anything—I will be as silent as the grave if you wish, but to remain here for years, perhaps for ever, oh! it is too dreadful!" and he buried his face in his hands, and sobbed aloud.

The Captain looked at the prostrate figure at his feet; at length he gave a slight laugh, "This is worth living for, at least; I have you, my bitterest enemy, at my feet sueing for mercy—you dare to ask me for that, you, who blasted my prospects, and made me an outcast, you who betrayed the love of one dearer to me than life, and then by your perfidy made a demon of her, and yet you ask me for mercy. I swore that day when by your devilish machinations I became an outcast from society, that I would have revenge. Now guess why I saved your life, —because your death would not satisfy me; in the grave you would not suffer—but here, shut up in solitude for years and years, the

only break sometimes the company of your enemy; that will be a revenge worth having; besides, strange to relate, I wished to save her from being guilty of your death; so you know what you may expect from me. Having settled that point, I should advise you to eat and drink, and afterwards I will show you the room where you will reside for the future; it's limited in size for a life-long residence, but it's larger than a coffin," said the man, with a sarcastic laugh, as he placed wine and food before his victim.

Mr. Allen could not eat, but he drank off a glass of wine, and then thrust his hand in his breast.

"Oh! you need not search for your pistol; I took that long ago," said the Captain. "Why man, you don't think when I catch a rattlesnake I omit to draw his sting. But, come, I am wasting time; as you will not eat, you must be removed to your spacious apartments."

At a signal two men entered, and receiving orders from their superior, took up the wounded man as though he had been a baby and carried him along some narrow passages until they came to a small door, which their captain unlocked.

"Here is your abode, Monsieur," he said. "I wish you pleasant dreams and happy memories. Good-night!"

Mr. Allen heard the door closed and relocked, and then sank down insensible.

"Come, my men, it's time to be going," said the Captain, whom for the future we shall call Captain Paul. "Now we have made that spy safe we must not let him escape. Jim, you stay and watch with old Jean."

"Aye, aye, sir; rest assured we will keep him all right; he may thank his lucky stars, Captain, that he has you to deal with instead of me. I'd soon put him out of the way, a cowardly sneaking spy. I'd think no more of wringing his neck than a fowl's," he muttered.

The Captain smiled, for he was certain now of Harold Allen being well watched. Jean thought him a spy of the coastguard, and would, as he said, have wrung his neck before he let him escape.

In a little time, La Vengeance (the name of the vessel) was scudding over the blue sea towards the white cliffs of Albion.

Some years before this story opens, when the contraband trade was carried on to a great extent between England and France, a vessel

called the "Vengeance" had been one of the most daring of all the smugglers. The wildest and most improbable stories were told of her captain and crew, and although large rewards were offered for her capture, she, being a fast sailer, still continued during all these years to baffle justice and escape the law. There was no doubt that the captain had many friends on shore, both in England and France, or he could not have eluded pursuit in the way he did for such a length of time, in spite of all the intrepidity and cleverness of the crew.

They had numerous hair-breadth escapes, only getting off "by the skin of their teeth," as the Yankees say, but still they were at liberty. The crew, composed of French and English men, mustered twenty. Their captain would have seemed English from his appearance, but he spoke French as only a Frenchman can speak it. They were a determined set of fellows, and, unlike the ordinary run of law-breakers, there was no wildness about them; they were in earnest, terribly and seriously in earnest, each man it was said had some private revenge to gratify, and they were all bound by a fearful oath to assist each other in paying the debt; most of them were

men who had suffered, or thought they had, a wrong, which they must pay in full before they could rest, and this was the reason people said why the vessel was called the "Vengeance." But although there was a great deal of conjecture, no one, not even those who aided the smugglers, knew anything as to who or what they were. One thing, however, was certain, they managed to baffle the coastguards of both countries, much to their chagrin.*

When the "Vengeance" had got clear of the shore, and was far out in the Channel, Captain Paul retired to his cabin to snatch a short repose. On his awaking he found that they were close on the English coast near Dover. The shore reached, he made his way to the railway station, and took a first-class ticket to London, where he remained a few days engaged in private business.

* This vessel had disappeared for a length of time, and only the recollection of it was retained by some of the oldest fishermen of St. Jacques, when it suddenly reappeared, and was heard of as being actively engaged in running the blockade during the American war. The present captain was known to be a bold, fearless, reckless man; although no one suspected him of occasionally doing a little smuggling on his own account.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAISON JONES.

IN one of the hundreds of little houses in the neighbourhood of Camden Town, all much after the same pattern, and so ugly that people wonder how others can live in them, sat a young boy and girl; the former, perhaps, might be fifteen or sixteen, the latter some three or four years younger.

We will describe the girl first in deference to her sex. She was a little slight thing with sad wistful dark eyes and a pale sallow complexion; her face, although not pretty, was one that would not pass unnoticed. The boy was fair and effeminate-looking, with an appearance of suffering, which could easily be accounted for by the crutches that stood by his chair; he was a cripple. Both were neatly and cleanly dressed, though the girl's things were worn and threadbare.

"Are you in pain, Paul?" she asked, as she laid her little hand caressingly on his shoulder.

"Not much, Katie. I was only thinking how I should like to see my father, and what a dear sweet little thing you are, to come and sit with me, instead of playing with the other children."

"But I like it, Paul, and see what a lot of wonderful things you have taught me out of those books. I'd rather any day come and sit with you, than play with those rough boys and girls in the street. Why, do you know yesterday when I went to get some bread, Tom Hennley tore my frock, pulled my hair, and tried to make me cry, but he couldn't. I wouldn't cry for all his knocks, I told him."

"A great coward!" replied the boy, "I only wish I had been there; I would have thrown my crutches at him."

"Oh! no, Paul; I am so glad you were not, because then he might have hit you and hurt you."

"There's Mrs. Jones calling you, Katie; come back soon."

"All right, coming," replied the girl, in answer to a harsh voice that was shrieking

her name up the stairs. "I won't be long, Paul," she said, as she ran out of the room.

"Drat you, you lazy little hussy; what do you mean by leaving the baby directly my back was turned; do you think I am to keep you here, finding you in victuals and clothes, for you to leave the children the moment my back's turned, to go idling with that stuck-up lame boy in the first floor. I'll teach you, there." And the virago caught hold of the little thing and shook her like a reed.

But Paul had heard the altercation, and had come out of his room, although the woman had spoken in a low tone, so that he should not.

"Mrs. Jones," he cried, "just leave Katie alone, or when my father comes I'll tell him to take me away."

Now this was a serious threat. Mrs. Jones was the landlady of the house, and managed to pay her rent and taxes by letting her drawing-room floor as she called it. The father of the lame boy had taken it for himself and son, but he was nearly always away, and Paul was very easy to wait upon, besides they paid well for her miserable rooms. So she turned pale when she found her lodger had overheard her conversation with Katie.

"I beg your pardon, Master Paul," she said, in a whining voice; "but it's so hard to keep one's temper with these children worritting one's life out, and that lazy ill-tempered girl leaving them to get into mischief."

"Mrs. Jones, Katie is not to blame; I rang for her."

"Oh! well, of course that makes all the difference, and I hope you'll not say anything to your Pa about it, Master Paul."

"Well, mind you don't scold Katie any more then," replied the boy as he went into his room, and Mrs. Jones descended to her abode in the lower regions.

She was a small shrewish-looking woman between thirty and forty, with a thin red nose and sharp disagreeable small grey eyes. She had on a dress of fine faded stuff, and a dirty cap, ornamented with artificial flowers, covering her untidy head. Her husband was a clerk in an auctioneer's office in the city, with a salary of ninety pounds a year to support a wife and five children on; and Mrs. Jones eked out their slender means by letting their three best rooms.

Katie was the orphan daughter of Mr. Jones's only sister, who had run away from her home, and some years after come back

destitute with a little girl. The kind-hearted man—for, unlike his Xantippe of a wife, he was gentle and generous—took in the poor erring woman and her child. But it was not for long that Ellie Jones had to eat the bread of charity; sorrow, disgrace, and desertion broke her heart, so she laid down her burden in less than a year, and went to the land where all tears are wiped away, leaving her poor child to the care of her brother, who cheerfully took upon himself the burden of another to support. But the wife made the child's life anything but a happy one, and until Paul had come to the house to lodge, Katie had often prayed that she might go to her mother; she was more lonely and sad than any orphan. Her mother was dead; her father she did not know, and if she had she would have no claim upon him.

Poor little Katie! Her mother's had been the old old story: a pretty, vain girl, dazzled by the stolen attentions of one in a higher position than herself; a weak woman's confidence in a scoundrel; a few years of petting and kindness, and then thrown away like a withered flower to die, when the pretty face that had proved her ruin began to fade.

Mrs. Jones was not gifted with extreme

delicacy of feeling, so that Katie knew the disgrace of her birth only too well, and being a sensitive child, the taunts caused her acute agony, but nothing could make her blame her mother; she had loved the pale broken-hearted woman when alive, and adored her memory now that she was no more; all the reproaches and insults cast on the dead woman by her aunt, only made the child cling with more love to the recollection of her, so that Ellie Jones was loved with an intenser love, dead, than she had been living, but though Katie did not blame her mother for the sorrow of her young life, she had, child as she was, a deep hatred of her unknown father.

She was the little drudge of the Maison Jones, she was housemaid, errand boy, and nurse all in one; hard living and harder words were the poor child's lot, but she had one pleasure, that Mrs. Jones could not deprive her of, which lifted her out of the dreary present into the glorious realms of fancy; little Katie had a poetic imaginative mind, and no matter how hard the present, she lived in the fairy bowers her fancy painted; this had been her sole pleasure until a year before, when Paul had come to live at her

aunt's: then opened a new vista to the poor neglected child. Paul took a fancy to the quiet dark-eyed little thing, he used to get her to sit with him and read books of adventure to her, besides which, he became her instructor and gave her lessons in reading and writing, whenever she had time to spare.

This good work brought its own reward to the crippled boy; it gave him employment, which took him out of himself and his affliction, and gained him a world of love, his little pupil absolutely worshipped him, he divided the rich treasure of Katie's heart with her dead mother. "It was like being in heaven," Katie said, "to sit in that quiet room with him, listening to the wonderful stories, and places there were in the world," and she would go to her hard work and harder treatment with a lighter heart, after one of these happy hours.

To-day, however, Mrs. Jones was crosser than usual, and she was determined Katie should pay for the insolence of that upstart cripple. He was beyond her resentment, poor Katie was in her power, so after shutting the door of the front kitchen, where the delectable family mostly lived, that no sound should reach Paul, she took a cane from the mantel-

piece, and rained down sharp stinging blows on the back and shoulders of the defenceless child.

"There, you ungrateful, lazy, ugly little wretch," she exclaimed, when obliged to leave off from sheer exhaustion, "that will teach you to behave better in future."

The tears ran down Katie's face, but no cry escaped her trembling lips; she had heard the threat about Paul leaving, and she would have kept silent even if her aunt had beaten her ten times more severely, rather than Paul should leave. But there was help at hand for the poor persecuted child.

Mrs. Jones was so intent on Katie's punishment, that she had not seen the kitchen door open, until a firm grip seized her shoulder, and then to her horror she saw not crippled Paul but his father.

"Woman, what are you doing to that child?" asked the man, white with passion. "I leave your house to-day."

"Oh no, pray don't," and the cries that bodily suffering could not extort, broke forth from Katie's pale lips at the thought of Paul leaving.

Captain Paul, for it was no other than he, looked at the child with pitying eyes.

"Will you come too, little maid?" he said, placing his hand kindly on her head, "and take care of Paul when I am away?"

Katie looked as though such a joy could not be possible.

"Ah, no, you do not mean it," she cried, with a piteous expression of intense eagerness.

"Yes, I do. Come!" and taking the child's hand, he turned to leave the room.

Mrs. Jones, who had been speechless with surprise and mortification during the brief colloquy between her niece and lodger, regained her tongue when she found them leaving the kitchen; she saw that conciliatory measures would now be useless, so casting aside the mask of politeness hitherto worn, she let loose the full fury of her temper.

"Stop," she cried at the top of her shrill voice, "don't think you are going to walk off with my husband's niece like that, for you shall do nothing of the kind; leave if you like, I'm sure it won't break my heart to see the backs of you and your insolent cripple of a son, but as for taking that girl I declare you sha'n't;" and she seized Katie's hand to drag her away from her protector. But she had mistaken the power of her tongue; because

her unfortunate husband gave in to her in everything directly she began to abuse, she thought she had only to raise her voice to conquer all the world. Her lodger only laughed unpleasantly.

"That's right, talk away, hard words break no bones, but keep your hands off or I will send for the police and give you in charge for ill-treating this child."

Mrs. Jones drew back, for she saw by the man's face that he was in earnest.

"Now let this child go quietly, and I will pay you a month's rent instead of notice, and add five pounds towards paying for a little drudge to supply the place of your niece."

This was a temptation to Mrs. Jones, but then she remembered that no servant could be found as good as Katie had been, so she tried another tack.

"Do you think, Mr. Noir, (the name she knew Captain Paul by) that I would sell my husband's own flesh and blood for money?"

Her lodger laughed. "You don't mind trying to murder your own flesh and blood, so I thought as the child is evidently going to have some bad illness, you would be glad to be quit of her, especially as I heard you say she was only a useless expense, and took the

bread out of your children's mouths: however, I will see Mr. Jones and relate the scene I have just witnessed, and perhaps he will listen to my proposals."

Now Mrs. Jones, although she ruled her husband, would have been very sorry that he should know how his little niece was treated, for he had told her once that if she behaved badly to the orphan, he would run away to America, and leave her to do the best she could; it might have been an idle threat, but Mrs. Jones was afraid of it notwithstanding. Besides, the five pounds would be hers to do what she liked with; so making a virtue of necessity, she said:

"Well, if you promise to take her entirely off my hands, I'll let her go, but I hope you'll live to repent your ingratitude, you ungrateful girl," turning to the trembling child.

"Never mind that, she may or she may not," replied Captain Paul, "it's no business of yours one way or the other, so my little maid, run up and pack Paul's clothes and books while I settle with this good lady here."

Katie was in such an ecstacy of joy that she could hardly believe she was awake. Going away from this cruel aunt who ill-

treated and taunted her—to live always with Paul her hero, oh it could not be true, it was too delightful; even the glorious castles she had built had fallen short of such joy as this. But she was an affectionate little soul, and in the midst of her happiness felt a pang at leaving the baby Jones; true he had been her old Man of the Sea, and all the blows she received from her aunt were in some mysterious way through him. Still she bore no malice, and even loved the white, fat, imbecile-looking lump of humanity: so she ran to it and devoured it with kisses, whispering in its ear all kinds of endearments and promises of good things to be bestowed on it in the future. The baby took the caresses and promises very coldly, only opening its vacant watery blue eyes, to such an extent, that it seemed doubtful whether it would ever close them again, and giving vent to insane chuckles which appeared to create immense satisfaction in its small breast; but two other olive branches of the Jones family, aged respectively three and four, set up the most frantic howls, dancing round Katie and the baby in a sort of infant war dance, very clever, no doubt, but dreadfully trying to the nerves.

Mrs. Jones was not, as we have seen, noted

for patience, and the demonstrations of grief on the part of her offspring had anything but a soothing effect to her already ruffled feelings, so she administered slaps, right and left, which instead of diminishing rather increased the uproar. In the midst of the weeping and wailing Katie escaped upstairs to Paul, and told him the glorious news.

"Paul," said the child, "are you glad to have me always with you, say you are."

"Of course I am," replied the boy, "and I am very glad to get away from this place."

Captain Paul soon settled his business with the good lady as he ironically called her, and in less than an hour the three had bid adieu to the house of Jones. He took the children to a quiet hotel, in the neighbourhood of Oxford Street, where he was evidently known.

"It is only for the present, my boy," he said in answer to a question from his son, as to their destination, "and then I am going to take you away from London into the country to live for the future."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FLIGHT FROM THE CHATEAU.

"WELL Monsieur Alexandre, Madame Jacqueline was right after all. Here is a letter from Monsieur Allen, telling me to send his luggage to an hotel in London and enclosing a note for the bill; it's very generous, indeed, but then these English are always so very rich and erratic. Only fancy going away like that, without a word, for a sail in a nasty little fishing boat on such a miserable evening! It is only to be accounted for by the fact that he is an Englishman," said Madame Duval, with a shrug of the shoulders. "However, I am very glad that the gentleman is all right."

Monsieur Alexandre smiled a cynical smile, as much as to say that he knew something if he would only tell; he was not to be shaken out of his pet theories.

It is true that this Englishman had not met with foul play at the hands of tyrants, but that did not say, as he ingeniously put it, that he had nothing to do with them, perhaps he was an emissary of the government instead of a supporter of the glorious cause, at any rate Monsieur Alexandre was not going to give up his opinion on the subject, "he knew what he knew," although it was not quite clear to anybody if he knew anything at all. "We are on the verge of stirring times," he said; "and when the country is on the brink of a volcano, a straw shows which way the wind blows."

This eloquence had its effect on his hearers. It's true they could not see what connection there was between volcanoes, stirring times, straws, and the Englishman taking a sail, but it is not always necessary to be logical to be believed, so there were those of a certain class who shook their heads wisely, and said "Monsieur Alexandre was not so much of a fool after all," etc., etc., and the, worthy man smoked his cigarette and drank his wine, which had already had some slight effect on him, with the air of a Solomon. "Rest assured," he said, "we shall have a change, the tyrants fear me, in spite of all their power

we shall triumph, the good days will come again, when the people—the glorious people—will be the rulers, as they were in 1793, then the flag of liberty will be unfurled."

"Umph," replied Monsieur Blanc, "I hope none of us will live to see that day. Fear you, indeed! Why should the tyrants, as you call them, fear you? I dare say they never heard of you, and if they did would only laugh at you as a maniacal barber."

Now this was more than Monsieur Alexandre could stand, for if there was one thing he was sensitive about it was his profession. He, with the soul of a patriot, to be called a "maniacal barber!" It was too much, so he rose from his seat and addressed the assembling Citoyens and Citoyennes.

"The Citoyen Blanc has insulted me, and insulted the people through me—the glorious people. I call upon him not only to apologise, but——"

"Bah!" interrupted Monsieur Blanc. "I insulted the people? I did nothing of the kind. Why, man, what am I but one of the people myself? But I don't wish to say anything personal I'm sure, only you talk such rubbish about the good times, as you call them, and always turn the conversation on the same

channel that I cannot help losing my temper sometimes; however, I don't wish to quarrel, here's my hand."

Monsieur Alexandre being, in spite of his bloodthirsty principles, the most peaceful of men in practice, took the proffered hand, and tranquillity was restored.

"As the Citoyen Blanc has demanded pardon, I forgive," said the magnanimous man, with a grandiloquent air, "yes, in the name of the people I forgive; but now to return to this Englishman, I never did like the expression of his face, there was something in it which told me he belonged to the proud aristocrats, and he knew I saw through him, no doubt, and that is the reason he left St. Jacques in such a hurry; he thought when he came here to find a set of unsophisticated blockheads, but to his surprise, he found a man who could read him like a book."

"Monsieur Alexandre, how can you talk like that, why it was only the other day you said how much you liked him, besides what had he done that he should fear you I should like to know? but, putting all that aside, I must say that you are not very polite, calling us all fools except yourself. I have put up with your ridiculous conversations in my house for

a long time, because I did not think you meant half you said, and looked on it as a parcel of rubbish, but now that you are getting outrageous, and insulting the other gentlemen who attend here, I must beg you not to come any more to the 'Lion de Or,'" said Madame Duval, her cap and earrings vibrating again with rage.

This was a serious turn affairs were taking for the unlucky Alexandre; it would be dreadful if Madame Duval shut her doors against him, for then he would have nowhere to go to escape from his wife, so there was no help for it but to do all in his power to appease the wrathful dame. It was the unfortunate barber's turn to apologize now, which he did most humbly, for the prospect of being turned away from the hospitable hearth of the "Lion de Or" spurred him on.

It was some time before he could soothe the ruffled feathers of Madame, but at length his eloquence prevailed sufficiently for his pardon to be granted.

"Has any one seen Madame Jacqueline today?" asked Monsieur Blanc, when, the culprit having been forgiven, general conversation resumed its sway.

"No, nor yesterday either, it's very re-

markable, for she has never missed coming into the town once a day ever since she has been at the château, and now I come to think of it, neither Madame or the young Mademoiselles have been for their walk, I hope nothing is the matter; if I don't see Madame Jacqueline to-morrow, I shall send up to the château to ask," said the hostess, "for I cannot make it out."

"Ah," replied Monsieur Alexandre, "I always thought there was something very mysterious about the Citoyenne Jacqueline and her mistress. I have nothing to say against them, but it is odd never speaking to any one or going to church, not that I blame them exactly for that," (poor Alexandre being a Red Republican thought he must also affect indifference to religion, like many more people in far better positions in life than himself, and therefore could not let such a splendid opportunity pass without reference to his socialist principles), "I look upon going to church as a superstition, which is unfit for us; all very well for the women, you know, but we, what do we want with religion, except the glorious religion of Liberty."

"You had better let Monsieur le Curé hear you," said Madame Duval. "Fit for the wo-

men, indeed! I wonder, Monsieur Alexandre, you are not ashamed of yourself to talk in that way."

"In what way, Madame Duval?" asked a sharp voice, at the sound of which Alexandre turned pale as a ghost, and all his pomposity gave place to fear and meekness. "What nonsense, monsieur, have you been talking, now, I should like to know? this is what you call going out to call on a customer, coming here to waste your time instead of attending to your shop—but I will not allow it, so just come home at once."

The miserable man who had deserted his shop, deluding his wife with the pretext of attending on a customer, rose at once at her bidding with a bad grace, and Monsieur Blanc would have been more than human if he could have resisted a parting shot at his unhappy adversary—

"I don't wonder that you sigh for the national barber and the Reign of Liberty."

"What!" exclaimed the sharp voice, "has he been talking about that rubbish, *bête* that you are, how dare you when I told you not? we shall be sent to prison some day because you cannot hold your imbecile tongue. National barber, indeed! a pretty national

barber you'd make when you don't know how to look after your own business in St. Jacques, bah!"

There was a general giggle at Madame's mistake, which did not improve her temper.

"What are you all laughing at me for?" she asked, "and you—why do you stand here and see me insulted?" she demanded of her wretched spouse.

"They are not insulting you, my dear, they are only laughing at the idea of my being the national barber, because it is not a man, but the guillotine, that is called by that name."

"And who calls it so, I should like to know? it is a great pity, then, that he has not the shaving of you. I'm sure I'd give my consent very quickly, but now come home, or it will be the worse for you."

Pity stirred the hearts of the barber's late adversaries; although they despised the man they could not help compassionating his unhappy position.

"Well," said Monsieur Blanc, as the vanquished republican and his better half left the room, "I would not stand that if I were he; never saw such a woman in all my life; if the good times, as Alexandre calls them, were to

come again, I should not like to fall into the clutches of Madame if she were in power. She would make a capital fury of the guillotine, and the first person she would send to be shaved would be her husband, I dare swear. It is a good thing for him, I think, that we have a government where every one cannot do as they like, or else I think from the amiable expression of Madame's eyes when she left, that he would soon be in another world? what do you say, Madame Duval?"

"I think nothing at all except that any man is a fool to let a woman make him ridiculous before the world, not but what I should imagine Monsieur Alexandre was enough to try the patience of a saint with his stuff and nonsense about revolutions and liberty, but there—— Why, whatever is the matter, Monsieur Robert? you seem quite out of breath," as that lean individual came up panting from the exertion of a long run.

"I am, madame; I have run all the way to tell you the news," he said, with an important air.

"What news?" exclaimed all the occupiers of the parlour of the "Lion d'Or" at once, eagerly pressing round the new comer—the

barber and his wife forgotten in their curiosity to hear what the butcher had to tell.

"They are gone!" he said.

"Gone! who's gone?"

"The people at the château."

"Never! impossible! When did they go? who saw them leave?" broke from the lips of the astonished group.

"They have gone, it is a fact, every one of them; I did not see Madame Jacqueline yesterday, so to-day I went to the château and you may imagine my surprise when I found it shut up, and all the inhabitants gone away."

"I never did hear anything like that—gone away! and just as suddenly and strangely as they came!" said Madame Duval; "we were wondering why we had not seen Madame Jacqueline for the last two days, and now there is a very good reason for her absence, but tell us something more about it—do you know why they left, and who saw them go? is the proprietor of the château aware of the lady's flight?"

"Ah! I cannot tell you that, for I do not know myself, but that they have left you can see for yourself—the place is entirely shut up. Wonders will never cease; first the Englishman disappears, and we no sooner hear that

he is all right, than the mysterious lady and all her household go, no one knows when, no one knows where; but talking of the Englishman reminded me of something I heard today from old Pierre, the fisherman, who landed last night; he says he felt sure he met 'La Vengeance,' not that I can believe him, because it's some years since we heard of her, here at St. Jacques, and it is not worth her while to trouble us now we have become fashionable."

The very mention of "La Vengeance" seemed to cast a strange spell of awe and silence for the moment over the assembly, for although only a few of the older inhabitants of St. Jacques had really seen her, one and all had heard the wild stories rife among the superstitious fishermen, who were wont to cross themselves devoutly at the bare mention of her name, but it was only for a moment, and the incident was forgotten in the all-absorbing topic of Mrs. Horton's departure, and her unwonted flight served the villagers with food for conversation for many months after.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OLD HOUSE BY THE SEA.

TWO years have passed since the startling events occurred which threw the town of St. Jacques into such a state of excitement, and it is to a little dull village on the Cornish coast that we must take the reader.

There was nothing in Saltcombe-on-the-Sea to interest one, if we except the watery element, and that was certainly all-pervading. The few straggling houses that composed the village were situated on a small promontory, so that the three sides of Saltcombe-on-the-Sea were surrounded by the briny ocean; and briny it decidedly was; the air felt salt and made your eyes water, the sea-weed that was the principal fuel used by the villagers, had a salty smell; indeed you could not get away from the ocean do what you would.

Very few people would have chosen it for a

residence, and yet the only great house in the village, a gaunt, grey stone mansion, whose very walls were almost washed by the waves, was inhabited after standing empty several years.

The Cornish people are very superstitious, and the Combe House had got a bad name among them, so that it was with no little surprise some two years before they heard of its again being let. Many shook their heads at first and prophesied that the new comers would soon leave, but they ceased to do so when two years passed and found the tenants still there. It was no wonder the fishermen looked askance at the old weatherbeaten grey house, with its small windows and thick walls, for it was a forbidding-looking place enough. Some houses like people carry their characters in their faces, and this was the case with the Combe House. It had a wicked look about it, which was not to be wondered at if the stories told about it and its former inhabitants were true ; but perhaps the new tenants who took it had never heard its evil reputation. However, if they had or not they took it, and what is more, stayed.

It was situated on the extreme edge of the promontory, about a mile from the village.

There were no neighbouring houses near it; on one side it was bounded by the Atlantic, and on the other by the bare, bleak Cornish rocks. There were no trees, a few stunted shrubs, and a dark, tall yew hedge, cut into queer grotesque shapes, comprised all the verdure the garden could produce, except some rank grass which seemed to flourish in spite of the salt air.

It was through this gloomy wilderness that you approached the front of the house, which faced the village; the back looked on to the rocks, at the foot of which lay the sea. A small winding path led down to a little cove, where there was a rude stone boat-house. The principal rooms overlooked the sea. It was a large, rambling place full of odd nooks and crannies and strange hiding places, for it had been built in troublous times when such things were necessary.

The principal entrance led into an immense hall, with seven doors on each side, and a staircase so wide that a coach and six might have easily been driven up it. There were numerous stone passages that sent forth ghostly echoes to every footstep, and were cold and chill even on the hottest summer's day. The downstairs rooms had floors of the

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same, and dark oak panelling with low ceilings. The upper apartments had evidently been the state rooms, for they were more lofty and altogether less dungeon-like, though even they were far from cheerful places to pass a lifetime in.

In one of the largest and least gloomy rooms overlooking the ever murmuring sea, sat Mrs. Horton, the recluse of St. Jacques, and her daughters. The two years had made no difference in her magnificent beauty; if anything she was more lovely than when we last saw her, but it had changed the half-formed girls into charming women. The scar was still visible on the white brow of Lola, but it had become less distinct, and scarcely marred the charm of her expressive face. Louie was more sweet-looking, perhaps, than her sister, but it would have been difficult to tell them apart. The wonderful resemblance between the twins had not decreased with years; they were more alike if possible than ever.

But they were not the only occupants of that room. At a further window, watching the dancing waves, was Paul the lame boy we saw in Camden Town, and little Katie Jones. The boy was but slightly altered in appear-

ance since we saw him last—a trifle older looking, nothing else—while Katie would scarcely have been recognized except for the expression of her sweet brown eyes. The sickly palor which formerly spread over her face had given place to a clear healthy colour, pale it was true, for Katie was one of those who never show health by rosy cheeks. Her complexion was of that brunette tinge which lacks colour, but it was soft as satin, and with a creamy shade which harmonized with her dark hair and eyes. She would never perhaps be a brilliant beauty like either of the golden-haired twins, but she would, if she went on improving as she had done in the last two years, make a singularly attractive woman.

She was sitting by the boy's side resting her chin on one little hand, while the other was caressing his white-looking fingers. Silence pervaded the room. The twins were working, their mother gazing over the sea with a weary look in her cold blue eyes, and Katie and Paul busy watching the waves, and perchance building castles never to be inhabited in this world. At last it was Mrs. Horton who broke the spell.

"Paul, come here to this window."

The boy rose, and with Katie's help seated himself near Mrs. Horton.

"By the way, Katie, have you had your music lesson to-day? No! Ah, I thought not! Lola, take the child down and give her her lesson directly!"

This command was given in rather a sharp tone, for the beautiful lady was often irritable with her younger daughter. Now Lola did not like poor Katie, and therefore shirked whenever she could the task of giving the child her lesson. Why she disliked her she could not tell, but there was a feeling of antagonism between the two, which Katie, young as she was, returned. She distrusted Lola, and saw with the clear eyes of childhood that the girl's nature was not good. On the other hand she adored pretty Louie, and gave her the next niche in her heart to Paul.

Although Lola was very cross at the task imposed upon her, she knew better than to dispute her mother's command, so she accompanied Katie, though in no very amiable mood. But it was impossible to be angry with Katie as far as her lesson was concerned, because the child was passionately fond of music and was wonderfully quick and intelligent. Besides, Lola had not a nature to vent

her temper on an unoffending object. She did not like Katie, but that was no reason why she should blame her for having to teach her. Lola in her way was just.

The lesson finished, Lola returned to her work, and Katie practised on, making sweet music in the old house. Her love for it amounted to a passion, and she repaid a thousand-fold for the instruction she received. She had been well taught, for Mrs. Horton and her daughters were most accomplished musicians. She had learned to love the glorious, soul-stirring works of the great masters, so that it was no light, laughing valse that awoke the echoes of Combe House, but the grand inflammatas and music of the great masters. They were favourites with Katie, and she was never tired of playing them. She was not as brilliant a performer as the girl who instructed her, but she played with a depth of soul which was inborn that Lola could never have taught her. As she played on, all the incidents of her short life passed before her. She almost felt as though her mother was near her, then her wretched life with the Joneses and the happiness of the present—for Katie was very happy in the old house. She liked the beautiful lady whom

she was told to call aunt, and then she had Paul and Louie. What more could she desire?

Yes, Katie was very, very happy in the old Combe House, and each night thanked the Father of All Mercies who had bestowed such blessings on her. Katie's prayers were not, perhaps, strictly orthodox, but then they were the only ones she knew, and she had learnt them at her mother's knee—that poor erring but loving mother, who had at least done some good when she taught, in her simple faith, her child to go to the feet of the only Father for such as herself.

At Combe House religion was a subject never mentioned. The Sundays were the same as any other days, except that the needle-work was banished; all else went on the same, no going to church, no prayers. God seemed forgotten in the household save in the breast of the orphan child.

Whilst Katie's music was swelling through the house, Mrs. Horton and Paul were sitting together talking seriously, in a low tone.

Lola tried to hear what it was they were saying so earnestly, but as they were at the farther end of the long room, she could not, much to her chagrin, catch a word. Lola, in-

stead of getting over her habit of prying, seemed to allow it to increase, as she got older, together with her dislike for her mother, and she was ever on the watch to find out her secrets.

But Mrs. Horton was on her guard; she saw the character of her younger daughter, and took her course accordingly. She loved Paul almost as a son, and little Katie she trusted more than her own children, with the strange instinct that the most hardened criminals show towards the good and true. In danger she would have trusted her life to Paul or Katie, but not to either of her own girls: Louie was so delicate and fragile, and Lola she knew to be treacherous.

The reader has seen enough of Mrs. Horton to know that she was, if not a very bad woman, far from being a good one, yet she loved her elder daughter with a love as true and deep as the best of women could have bestowed. She had not been a strictly good mother to both her children, for she loved Louie to the exclusion of Lola; she allowed her affection for her favourite to be perceived, sometimes in a most marked manner, causing Lola to entertain a bitter feeling against her

that only increased, instead of diminishing, with time.

It was no wonder she cared most for the elder, she had such a soft, yielding nature, but it was this very nature, so sweet and charming, that her mother knew she could not rely on in danger, for Louie, free from guile as an angel, was a puppet in the hands of her sister, therefore it was that Mrs. Horton would have turned to Paul and little Katie in real trouble.

"Paul, will you row me a little way out, now? I shall be glad to get the sea-breezes," said Mrs. Horton, noticing her younger daughter's anxiety to catch the purport of her conversation with Paul; so the two passed from the room, down the narrow path that led to the boat-house, Paul leaning on the arm of the woman.

Once in the boat Mrs. Horton bent forward towards Paul, and said—

"You have been here now two years, Paul; in all that time have you never guessed who I am?" and she gazed with loving eyes into the pale, delicate face of the boy. "I am your aunt, your father's sister; it is not to tell you that, dear, however, that I have brought you here, but listen—you are now

almost a man, Paul, and old enough to be trusted with a secret that concerns you and all connected with it. Have you never wondered what your father is, and why I have buried myself here away from the world? Ah! I see you have; your father"— and here she leant forward and whispered in the boy's ear,—"is an outlaw; he has been engaged in some very questionable transactions, and I have hidden myself all these years for Revenge. Aye, Paul, Revenge, such as woman never yet took! I have been wronged most basely, but I am working my vengeance." Passion so distorted the lovely face of his aunt that he shrank away from her for a moment. She saw his look of horror, and laid her white hand on his arm. "Nay, Paul, do not condemn me until you know what it is that has made me what I am, but I cannot tell you now; I have told you thus far that you may know how to act should danger come."

Paul's moral teaching had not been very good, for he had been left very much to himself, but "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," and so He had implanted noble thoughts and virtuous instincts in the lame boy's breast, and he shrank with the horror of a pure nature from the thought of crime. He had read

alluring tales of men's daring, so the knowledge of his father's being an outlaw did not shock him as might have been expected. He loved everything like bravery, and therefore it was that he rather admired than otherwise his father's rough life, looking with the romantic eyes of eighteen on all perilous adventures.

Mrs. Horton divined what was passing in her nephew's mind; it was just what she wanted, he could not have taken the news better; now if the danger came she could depend upon his help, as far as lay in his power.

"Now, Paul, dear, we had better return, but be sure and not breathe a word of what I told you to either of your cousins, or Katie; but what am I saying, there is no need to caution you—you are a man in heart, though a boy in years."

This subtle flattery found its way to Paul's heart, as Mrs. Horton intended it should, and now he would have died rather than betray the confidence reposed in him, even if it had not concerned his father. His aunt understood human nature well, and that seemingly implicit confidence had made the boy her devoted slave.

Not another word was spoken until they reached the landing-place. Paul was too much occupied with thinking over what he had just heard, and Mrs. Horton was too clever a woman not to let well alone.

The keel of the boat grated on the stones, and as they stepped on to the shore, Mrs. Horton saw a skirt fluttering among the rocks by the old boat-house. A dark frown contracted her brow for a moment, for she knew it was her younger daughter, but she dismissed it with an effort, and wreathing her face in smiles, called to Lola.

The girl, detected in her espionage, had no choice but to come forward, looking very uncomfortable at being caught.

"Why, my child, what are you doing down among the rocks alone?—watching for us?"

The tone was sweet and playful, but when Lola raised her eyes to her mother's face, to mutter something about "taking a walk by the sea," she saw a look there she had never seen before, and shuddered involuntarily.

"You should not, my child, come wandering alone on the slippery rocks—an accident so soon happens."

Lola felt a thrill of fear pass through her, and determined to be more cautious for the

future. She was a clever, deep girl, but Mrs. Horton read her like a book, and smiled a little sarcastically as she looked on the changing features of the girl.

Paul, guileless as an infant himself, had no idea of the declaration of war between his aunt and cousin going on before him. It seemed the most natural thing in the world to him that Lola should be down on the rocks watching for their return, and that her mother should caution her as to the inadvisability of such a proceeding, as there was no regular pathway down to the sea, except the narrow one to the boat-house, and the way Lola had chosen was the most difficult of ascent and descent, the boulders being steep and slippery. He looked on Louie and Lola, his juniors by a year, with the secret indifference of a youth of eighteen, and would have scoffed at the idea of expecting danger from either of them. But Mrs. Horton knew better, and her heart grew cold as she discovered each day how the character of her second daughter was becoming more like her own.

"Then," thought the miserable woman, "she has never had the sorrow that I have; I should never have been like this had I not been made so by my wrongs, and she, who

has had care and attention, without a breath of real sorrow, is cruel, sly, and heartless! Oh! the girl must have been bad from her birth!"

No, unfortunate mother, not bad to begin with—she had but required the rich wealth of a good mother's love and fostering care, to develope into a true and noble woman, but the soil had been poor and sterile, and the tares had grown up and choked the good seed in her young heart. Was it her fault, then, or the fault of her training, that she grew up sly, unloving, and revengeful to her mother, that mother, whose whole soul was steeped in the black waters of the same unchristian and fatal passion? But how easy it is to see the motes in other people's eyes, and thoughtlessly overlook the beam in our own.

CHAPTER IX.

AUNT BELLA.

IT was one of those hazy, pleasant days when nature seems to be in a thorough atmosphere of repose, and man and beast in a *dolce far niente* state, that Sir Herbert Weston and his wife were seated on the terrace, in front of the house, talking. Any one to have seen them, would never have imagined that they were an old married couple, so lover-like were their glances.

Master Wilfred, the idol of papa and mamma, was near trying his best to upset one of the stone vases filled with flowers, that adorned the terrace, and getting very hot and excited over his fruitless efforts. He was a fine, sturdy little urchin, with his mother's brown eyes and dark hair, but he gave promise of taking after his father in stature, for, young as he was, he would have done very well for a model of an infant Hercules.

"Willie, come here," called his father, at last roused from his *tête-à-tête* with his wife to a sense of the mischief his son and heir was meditating. "What are you trying to do?"

"Only going to upset this, papa," replied the rosy imp.

"Only," laughed Sir Herbert, "a modest reply, truly, but why do you want to break that vase, and spoil all mamma's pretty flowers?"

"I don't want to hurt mamma's flowers, but I do want to break this stone thing, because it thinks itself stronger than me."

"Stronger than you, little goose, of course it is; but how do you think it can imagine itself so, when it has no life? No, Will, you had better give up the attempt, and come with me for a ride."

This was too tempting a bait to be refused for a moment, so Master Wilfred scampered off, to reappear in a few moments on his little long-tailed pony, calling loudly for his father.

Sir Herbert waved a good-bye to his wife, and soon joined his son. Isobel stood leaning on the broad stone balustrade of the terrace watching the figures of the two dearer to her than life, as they rode through the park

awaking the echos with their merry laughter, and as she gazed a shade of sadness passed over her lovely face, and tears stood in her eyes; she wiped them away with a laugh. "What a goose I am to give way to such fancies, but I cannot help it. I am so happy that I tremble at my own joy, fearing it cannot last; perfect happiness, we are told, can never exist on this earth, and yet I have enjoyed it, almost without alloy, for nine long years. Oh, God! who has been so good to me, guard my loved ones," she murmured.

"Oh, I'll find her, she's on the terrace, I am sure," said a ringing, clear voice, at the sound of which Isobel's face beamed with smiles, as she started forward to clasp a tall, slender woman of some five or six-and-twenty years, with a light, sparkling, gipsy-looking face and laughing eyes, fairly dancing in their merriment.

"Why, Rella, who ever thought of seeing you?" exclaimed Lady Weston, when the first greetings were over. "Which way did you come? I have been looking over the park this half hour, and yet did not see you."

"For the simple reason, Issie, that I came the other road, and drove to the north entrance; there, dear, now that mystery is ex-

plained I will go on to inform you of the why and the wherefore of my presence here so unexpectedly. Lloyd and I came down to visit the Lincolns, at Warleigh, and finding I was only sixteen miles from my little sister, I determined to come over and stay a day with her, so you see, darling, I am going to be your guest until to-morrow. But where is my tyrant, Wilfred? I am in dread of his jumping out from behind those vases, and trying to make me scream—the little rogue, how is he? and is he as mischievous as ever?"

"One question at a time," replied Lady Weston, laughing; "to your first I reply that he is out, riding with Herbert, and to your second that he is in his usual state of health and mischief; only fancy, Rella, he was trying to upset that stone vase because, he said, it thought itself stronger than he, and he wished to give it a lesson."

"Ah, the little rascal, I'm glad he is out, for I want you all to myself, darling, for a little time; it seems such an age since I saw you. Why I declare you are the most wonderful woman, more like the queen of the fairies than ever; who to look at you would ever believe that you were the mother of that young Turk Wilfred?"

"Well I don't know about my being the queen of the fairies, Rella," replied Lady Weston laughingly, but I am sure you would make a capital Reine des Bohemiennes. But a truce to compliments; tell me how Lloyd and baby Letty are. Willy informed me yesterday that she was to be his wife when she grew up."

"Only fancy! but joking apart, Issie, I should be delighted if such a lot is really cut out for my little one, because I am sure Willy will be a splendid man just like his father, and I should have no fear of trusting my rosebud to him."

"Ah!" sighed Lady Weston, "who can tell what is in the future for anyone of us? but we are rather premature laying plans for two children of the respective ages of seven and two; so suppose we leave their prospective union alone and come back to the matter-of-fact present. Are you not faint after your long drive, and will you not have a glass of wine to sustain you until dinner?"

"Yes, I think it would be as well, Issie, and then it will be time I suppose to dress for the festive meal."

The time soon slipped away, for the sisters had so much to talk about, that the first

dinner-bell had rung some time before they separated to make a hurried toilet. Sir Herbert was waiting in the drawing-room to take his wife in to dinner, when she entered with her sister.

"Herbert," she exclaimed going up to him, "is not this a delightful surprise, Rella coming to see us?"

"Delightful, pet!" answered Sir Herbert, welcoming his guest with great warmth. "What good wind was it that blew us such a glad surprise? Lloyd and baby quite well?"

"Oh yes, it was only a freak of mine, we came to stay with the Lincolns, so I could not resist running over and taxing your hospitality for a night, it's such a time since I saw Issie."

"Tax our hospitality, indeed! I wish, Mrs. Rella, we could see your bright face oftener."

"Yes, Herbert, and does she not look like the queen of the gipsies more than ever, with those red flowers in her hair?"

"And does she not look more like a sprite than ever with those jasmine-like stars on her head?"

"Come, come, you two, you'll both do, but while you are comparing each other to gipsies, fairies, and other disreputable people, dinner

is getting cold," laughed Sir Herbert, giving an arm to each.

"You monster you, I am not quite sure that I ought to take your arm after telling me that my subjects are disreputable. As for that unfortunate victim Issie, I see she is too much crushed to resent the insult offered to her fairy court; but then you must expect that when a poor little fay marries a great mortal giant. There, Sir, what do you think of that? Where has my plague Willy gone?"

"Why to have his tea of course! Do you think, Madam Rella, that because we have only one, we spoil him like somebody I know, and let him have everything he likes; he certainly has pretty much his own way, but there are limits, you know, with us."

"Now, Herbert, that is a cruel libel. I'm sure Letty never dines with us."

"I should hope not," said Sir Herbert, laughing, "for poor Lloyd's sake."

"Poor Lloyd, indeed! he spoils baby more than I do."

"Ah! unfortunate man, I pity him, having two tyrants, one is bad enough; but to be under petticoat government, to such a fearful extent, must be awful; to be sure Miss Letty's are rather short at present, but I do

not know if that makes much difference, for I am of opinion that the smaller the specimen the greater the tyrant."

"Specimen of what, Herbert, the woman or the petticoat?"

"After that I think it is time for me to give over, as Willy says, for I see I am no match for you two."

Muriel, or more commonly called Rella, was Lady Weston's youngest sister. There was eight or nine years' difference in their ages. No one to look at them would have judged so, because Lady Weston looked years younger than her age, and Muriel older. Both were very lovely in their different styles; Lady Weston with her mignonne fairy-like figure, and sweet expressive face, and Muriel, with her tall, graceful form, rich brunette complexion, black hair, bright eyes, and brilliant teeth. It would have been difficult to find two more charming creatures than these sisters. And so Sir Herbert thought as his eyes glanced from his wife's classic head and pure loving face, to the dark brilliant features of her sister.

Muriel was a great favourite; she was quite a child when he first fell in love with Isobel, and but a young girl when he had married

his love. Muriel was so no longer, she was now a married woman, with a baby of two years old, whom she idolized. But in Sir Herbert's eyes she was always the same Rella he had known.

Her husband, as might have been expected, was the very opposite of his brilliant wife. Lloyd Curtise was the mildest of men, fair almost to insipidity, and some ten or a dozen years older than Bella; he was one of the best men that ever breathed, with a large rent-roll, and an equally large amount of adoration for his wife. If she was a little wilful and imperious at times, it was not to be wondered at, considering the way she was studied in everything; but Muriel, in spite of a little waywardness of temper, was a model wife, and thought no one in the world equal to her husband.

"Aunt Rella, aunt Rella!" exclaimed Master Wilfred, when, dinner being over, that young gentleman was allowed to come in with dessert, "who ever thought of seeing you!"

And he sprang on her lap, and hugged her vehemently, much to the detriment of her lace and flowers; but she was not one of those cold-hearted women who would repel the ca-

resses of a child for the sake of preserving a little finery, so she returned his embrace with equal ardour.

"Oh, I am so glad, so glad!" he said, capering about in high glee; "I've got such a lot to show you. You have not seen my pony or my rabbits, or anything; and have you brought Letty with you, because I want to teach her to ride?"

"No, darling, I have not brought her; and even if I had, I do not think she is quite old enough to commence riding on anything more dangerous than her papa's shoulder. However, I have no doubt some day she will be an accomplished equestrian; but we must wait, and have patience, you know."

"Come on the terrace, Aunt Rella, and have a race with me."

"I am sure," said his father, "you are not at all bashful, my boy, asking your aunt to race with you as though she were your own age."

"Well, papa, she always does; she is a brick!"

"Willy, my darling, where did you learn such a word? How can a lady be a brick?" asked Lady Weston, reprovingly.

Willy looked a little disconcerted at this.

He had not thought of it in that light, and somehow or other his mother always seemed to make his faults so clear to him, although she never scolded.

"I don't mean that exactly, mamma, but she is a—is a brick!—not a brick to make a house with, ma, but a good jolly brick, to play with."

And evidently perfectly satisfied with this lucid definition of what he did mean, Master seven years walked off with his pretty aunt. The boy adored her; she had always petted and spoilt him, even more than his father or mother; she was one of those natures that all children and animals seem to recognise at once as a friend; she loved them, and in that lay the secret of her popularity among them. If she walked out, all the stray dogs came and snuffed at her, as much as to say, "This is a friend of ours!" Miserable half-starved cats would follow her; and babies with one accord, from the highest to the lowest, held out their little arms to come to her. It is a remarkable instinct that children and animals have towards those who have tender natures; they are good judges of human nature. A man or woman may deceive those of their own age, but not a child or a dog; they see through

the coating of veneer down to the real nature beneath.

Muriel Curtise had no artificial polish. She was what she seemed to be, a thoroughly good, tender-hearted woman; hence the cause of her being a universal favourite. She loved amusing children; it was no bore to her, to listen to their little troubles or pleasures.

"I would rather, any day," she would say, "spend an hour with Willy, than listen to the vapid nonsense of some stupid booby, who is supposed to have come to years of discretion."

She had a horror of the young men who had done everything, seen everything, and found nothing in it. The creature who thought it the height of civilization to make himself into a bad imitation of a Red Indian, who, with lack-lustre eyes, would call the grandest works of the great Creator "not half bad," or say "By Jove!" in a drawling, feeble voice, weak like his intellect—these were the men she detested, and did not mind saying so. She was witty, and could turn to ridicule these wretched specimens of humanity who are, alas! in the present day far too prevalent.

Good God! to what is human nature sink-

ing if it be considered vulgar to express admiration for the glorious and beautiful; why was our enthusiasm for great deeds and noble actions implanted in us, if not to express what we feel? better be gushing than the cold, senseless, idiotic lump, called a "Man of the Period." A great deal has been said about the poor "Girl of the Period," why not now give the man a turn? The girl may be loud in her dress and conversation, copy her brother's slang, and affect the fastness for which she has the full credit, but she can never descend to the depths of inane stupidity, that the listless swell thinks perfection. They may make figures of themselves with their Grecian bends, small waists, masses of false hair, and extravagantly high-heeled boots, yet they cannot fall to the level of the so-called lord of creation, who, with his head thrust forward, and a weakness about the knees which requires a taste so vitiated (I beg pardon, educated) to admire, imagines he has not the attention he deserves, or the admiration he ought to inspire, even in this nineteenth century, where indifference and coldness are considered the height of good breeding. If you could put a North American Indian in the midst of a group of these arti-

ficial representations of women and men, he would look on the former with curiosity, but on the bad copy of himself with disgust and horror, that such things should be called by the same name as himself—man!

These creatures, without brains, who idle through the world, doing no good to their fellow men, except as sign-posts to show to what an abyss of degradation human nature can sink, were Muriel's detestation; whenever she saw one of these languid nonentities coming lounging towards her, she gathered together her forces, and generally ended by routing the enemy even out of his strong citadel—indifference. Consequently Muriel was not a favourite with the genus, but by men, real men, who could appreciate her brilliant wit and noble nature, she was eagerly sought after. She did not break her heart at the unpopularity she enjoyed among the other class; she took it as a great compliment to her intellect and understanding. Notwithstanding she was very far from being what is called a strong-minded woman, advocating the rights of women, wishing them to vote and turn the real men out of their places, although she thought that many women with equal brains might be found to supply their place, still she

considered women had enough to do to mind their own business; as long as they had justice done them, it was best to leave politics alone.

High-spirited, brilliant Muriel, who was listened to with attention by all with whom she came in contact, whose opinion was worth caring for, was now busily romping with her little nephew, like a child of his own age; to see the thoroughly hearty way in which she entered into the fun, was most refreshing, but all things must have an end, both sweet and bitter. "Although the day be never so long," says the old song, "At last it ringeth to evensong," so, as time waits for no man or child either, Willy's bed-time came, and he bade his charming playmate good night with a little flushed face and happy heart.

"Good-bye, Aunt Rella, I shall see you in the morning; do get up early to go with me for a walk before breakfast; good-night, papa; and now, mamma, wasn't I right? isn't Aunt Rella a jolly brick?" said the urchin, as he kissed his mother.

CHAPTER X.

THE ESCAPE.

THE night was dark, and the waves dashed with a dreary monotonous sound against the rocks in sullen continuance, and the wind, coming in strong fitful gusts, whirled the spray high up in the air, cold and chill, with a drizzling sea mist. It was a night when even the most hardy sought shelter, and gathered closer round their fires. Yet there was a traveller abroad, alone and on foot. He seemed tired and weary, for he kept stopping to rest every few minutes. At last he sank down thoroughly exhausted.

"It's no use," he exclaimed, "I cannot get on any further. I am dead beat. I wonder where I am. Oh, this sea, how I hate it, with its never-ending moaning. I think if I can once get away from it I will never go within sound of its hateful roar again. But shall I

escape after all? Oh, it would be too hard to give up now after what I have gone through before I have had revenge. Revenge! why the thought of it has kept me alive in that dungeon where that devil thought to keep me for life; but I've outwitted him, and now my turn is come at last. I will pay back with interest what I have suffered. There's Herbert, a fool, yet he managed to take the only woman I cared for away from me. And her! how I hate her now! They little think what is in store for them. I will bring that proud head of Isobel's to the dust. She shall repent her haughty refusal of me then. My fair friend Pauline, I wonder if you would sleep as well if you could know that I was not food for fishes after all your tender care. But the one who shall suffer most is that fiend, Paul. Nothing will be enough to satisfy my revenge on him!" he shrieked; but his voice was lost in the roar of the waves and the whistling of the wind. He struggled unsuccessfully to rise from the ground, but was cast down by a strong gust that threatened to rend the very rocks at his feet, and drenched him with foam and spray. Great pieces of sea rack were flung up with stones and sand, covering his prostrate figure; in fact the elements seemed

to have lashed themselves into a fury, of which he was the principal object, as he lay there for some minutes apparently bereft of life.

"Oh! this hateful sea," he groaned, when he returned to consciousness, "I think it has turned me mad! what strange thoughts crowded through my brain, shut up in that cave—what wild fancies! The past—the long-forgotten past—with all its sickly phantoms, rose before me night after night, till the mocking face of my enemy brought me back to that dreary present; and then it was that I felt a madness coming over me, coursing through my veins, and eating into my very life. How I struggled against it, and baffled it, knowing that if I once gave way, I should never, never escape my prison, and work my vengeance on those I hate! I triumphed then. Why should I give up now? They thought because I became quiet, and left off praying for liberty or death—anything rather than that dark solitude, with only the sea beating against the walls of my cave—that I was harmless; they little knew how I wrestled with myself when I felt a madness surging through my blood, to restrain myself from springing on them, and tearing them limb from limb—they little knew how desperate I

was becoming. That hole was only big enough for a mouse to get through at first, but by working each day for two years I got it large enough to creep through. What good fortune that there was no one in the outer cave, or I should have been taken after all; but it would have been a hardy man who would have ventured to touch me then; I'd have laid a few of them low, I think, before I had given up my own life.

"I wonder what they will do when they find I have escaped? will they dare tell Paul? —but they must, for he'll find it out for himself when he goes, as usual, to mock at me, and sees I have flown."

And the man laughed a little cruel laugh, that we have heard before. Of course the reader has recognized in the midnight fugitive the stranger of St. Jacques, known as M. Harold Allen; but it is now time to give him his right name—Roland Weston, good Sir Herbert's younger brother. Open-hearted and true himself, Sir Herbert had no idea of the hate his brother bore him; he had been truly sorry for his disappointment, but thought that it was long ago forgotten. Alas! he did not dream of the evil nature of his brother, or the plotting, busy brain, and black

heart that never forgave. He little knew that when that brother clasped his hand in friendship that it was the clasp of a Judas, who hated and envied him his good fortune, and who, even when he seemed most kind, was plotting against his peace and happiness.

After resting about an hour, Roland Weston resumed his weary march; he found a narrow winding pathway up one of the lowest cliffs, evidently used by the fishermen; following this, he reached the summit of the cliff, and after walking, or rather crawling, about two miles, he saw a light in the distance; on approaching it, it proved to be a town, no other than St. Jacques. He plodded on through the well-known streets, passed the shops so familiar to him, till he arrived at the "Lion d'Or."

It was a ghastly figure that confronted good Madame Duval, as she sat there knitting, and so unlike the well-dressed Englishman who had lived in her house two years before, that she did not recognize him until he told her who he was.

"*Mon Dieu!* Monsieur," she exclaimed, "can it be possible? Come in here, and drink this."

She pushed the almost fainting man into a

chair, and gave him a glass of wine, which he drank off with eagerness.

As the kind-hearted woman looked at the wretched figure before her, she could not keep back her tears, and she longed to ask what had brought him to such a condition. His tall slim figure was now reduced to a skeleton, and the red hair and beard, both of which had grown very long, gave a most unearthly expression to his pallid face; his clothes were in rags, his nails long as claws, and there were stains of blood over him. Madame Duval shuddered as she noticed them. Roland Weston saw her expression of fear, and hastened at once to remove it.

"Do not be alarmed, Madame, it is only my own blood you see; I tore my hands in making my escape from the cavern where I have been confined ever since I left here."

"Then Monsieur did not go for a sail, and send for his luggage?" said Madame Duval in intense astonishment.

"No, I never did."

"But I have got Monsieur's letter," she said, running out of the room, and re-entering hastily with a note in her hand.

Roland glanced at it.

"I never sent that; it is a forgery: I was

kidnapped by smugglers, and have been imprisoned by them ever since, until last night, when I managed to escape, and unexpectedly, but most fortunately, found my way here."

"*Mon Dieu!* is Monsieur sure he never sent for his portmanteau? Why it seems like a page out of a romance by Dumas! Can such things be! I thought all smuggling was done away with long ago. But all this time I have been talking Monsieur must have been getting faint for want of food."

So the good woman bustled about, and soon set before the famished man a plate of soup and a small roll of bread.

"Monsieur must not eat more now," she said, in answer to a longing look on his face, which plainly intimated that his hunger was not satisfied, "but go to bed and sleep, and in the morning have a good breakfast."

Roland Weston acknowledged the sense of Madame Duval's advice; he had fasted so long, that more food might be bad for him; so, after another glass of wine, he retired to the comfortable bed prepared for him, and slept the dreamless sleep of exhaustion.

When morning dawned, and the news of the stranger's singular arrival got spread abroad, St. Jacques was in a state of the

greatest excitement, and Monsieur Alexandre was in his element. Had he not said that Monsieur l'Anglais had met with foul play? No one believed him at the time, but perhaps for the future his opinion might have some weight; he was the only one who had given an idea of the truth; but of course he had been pooh-poohed: now they saw who was right, and perhaps they would pay more attention to his views and ideas on other subjects, as he had shown some little discernment. It was very aggravating, Monsieur Alexandre taking to himself all the credit, but the eagerness to hear as much as possible of the details, and the romantic incident itself, gave people so much to talk about, that Alexandre's marvellous acuteness was allowed to pass unquestioned. There was a great gathering at the "Lion d'Or" the night following the arrival of Roland Weston, and intense curiosity to catch the slightest glimpse of the hero of so singular an adventure. The villagers came flocking in, till the house was full to overflowing; those who could not get in had to content themselves with hanging about the door, or peering in at the windows, and one of the more adventurous spirits actually climbed up the post from which a

board with the representation of a golden lion used in bygone times to swing, but had since fallen away and decayed, to command a nearer view of the stranger's bedroom window. A thick holland blind being down, and the curtains closely drawn in the inside, not much benefit of seeing anything more than those down below accrued from the man's elevated position, so after a time he relinquished it, stating, when he reached *terra firma*, that he "saw the blind move, he was sure," which intelligence proved highly interesting and satisfactory to the members of the crowd.

Poor Madame Duval had enough to do to serve so many customers, although she secretly wished that a stranger might turn up every day, could he be the means of bringing such an influx of visitors to her bar, notwithstanding the fatigue it entailed upon her. She bustled about, now going upstairs to her patient, now coming down to serve, now retreating to her kitchen to see after some broth for the invalid, and trotting back again to give some new-comer or other all the news of her interesting guest, shaking her long earrings, shrugging her shoulders, and jesticulating till she was as red in the face as her coral eardrops.

Much disappointment was occasioned by the non-appearance of Roland as time passed, and he still kept his room. Monsieur Alexandre was in great force; he talked more extravagantly than ever; those who heard him almost began to fancy that he, and not the Englishman, had been the injured person, so martyr-like was his air at first. He railed most magnificently against tyrants, and prophesied astounding things that were going to happen when the people ruled—the "Sovereign People"—and by some mysterious process, known only to himself, made Roland's adventure into a political affair.

"What did I tell you, *mes amis*," he exclaimed, waving his arms after the most approved oratorical manner, "two years ago, on that never-to-be-forgotten night when this injured Englishman disappeared?—'He is the VICTIM,' I said, 'of tyrants!' *Now* who is right? It has been proved that *I* was."

"But it has not been proved," interrupted Monsieur Blanc; "you have no right to say that any government had anything to do with the stealing of this Englishman."

Alexandre only noticed this remark with a withering glance of scorn, and went on with his discourse—

"My friends, who was right when I said that this gentleman was a friend of the people's, and depend upon it that the government spies have made away with him?"

"Ah! ho! but you forget you also said you thought that he was an emissary of the government—how about that?" said the irrepressible Blanc.

"I disdain to reply to the absurd remarks offered by Citoyen Blanc; he is an upholder of tyranny, and is not heart and soul with the people."

"Do for goodness' sake, Alexandre, let the people alone for a time; you have worn the subject threadbare; and let us talk over this strange affair without making it a vehicle for your political opinions. You talk so much, you never let any one else get in a word edgeways; suppose you sit down now, and let somebody else have a chance; the truth is, that you are getting worse, and we must appeal to Madame Duval to banish you again if you will allow your tongue to run so on politics. I have no objection to a discussion now and then, but I much dislike other people's theories rammed down my throat whether I will or no."

"Quite right, Monsieur Blanc!" exclaimed

all the voices; and so Monsieur Alexandre, finding himself in a minority, sat down rather crestfallen, internally lamenting the degeneracy of human nature as exhibited at St. Jacques.

Whilst this dissension was going on, the subject of it was sitting in the little sanctum of Madame Duval, dreaming over plans for the future. He still looked pale and attenuated, but a bath, fresh clothes, and the removal of some of the superfluous hair about his face, had taken away the fearful appearance that he presented on the previous night, and restored him to something like his natural self. As he sat sipping the good wine that the hostess of the "Lion d'Or" had placed beside him, he matured all his intentions.

"Yes," he said to himself, "I will pay all I owe in full, with overwhelming interest; but first to get strong; this place will do as well as any other—and yet no, I am hardly safe here: I will return to the little village—there one is lost in the multitude—lost!—aye, lost indeed. All think me dead, and, instead of sorrow, feel joy that I am removed from their path. Heigho! it is a weary thing not to be mourned even by one creature—but pshaw! what do I want with such

maudlin nonsense!—money will buy everything. When I am Sir Roland I will marry, and become quite a shining light; before that time comes I have work to do—work that will require iron nerves, and the cunning of a fox. It is no mean adversary I have to contend with; as far as Herbert and Isabel go, all is plain sailing, but with Paul, and the lovely Pauline, I must be wary indeed. My first task must be to find her, for I can do nothing without her; she will be the trump card I shall hold in my hand till the last trick; with her in my power I can overwhelm Isabel, and get Paul into my clutches. My first task must be to discover her; of course she will have removed from here; but still I may as well make sure, by asking my hostess if the fair recluse is still at the old chateau. Ah! Pauline, you made a mistake when you let your hatred of me take such possession of you—better have had me on your side than make an enemy of me. As it is, we shall see who will win."

Madame Duval came into the room to see if her patient required anything. She was a kind-hearted woman, and the pale face of her guest appealed to her sympathies. Besides, the romance of the affair threw a kind of halo

round the Englishman, making him almost a hero in her eyes.

"Thank you, ma chère Madame," replied Roland, in answer to the questions as to whether he required anything. "I only desire the pleasure of your society, if you can spare the time to gossip with a somewhat stupid invalid."

Madame was a woman, and a Frenchwoman; so she was not insensible to the implied compliment that her presence would be agreeable to the distinguished-looking Englishman.

"If Monsieur would really like me to sit with him, I'll try my best to amuse him, and shall be most delighted."

So saying, she pulled her knitting out of her pocket, and sat down.

"Would Monsieur like to hear of the principal events that have happened in St. Jacques?"

Roland signified that would give him the greatest possible pleasure; so he let her talk on for some half-hour or so, telling him little simple legends connected with the place, that he sneered at in his heart, until he got her to the subject of the Chateau.

"Had Monsieur seen the Chateau?"

"Yes," he had.

"Ah! then Monsieur could see what a grand place it had been. Those were glorious days for St. Jacques, Madame Duval had heard her grandmother say, when Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse lived there in state, almost like king and queen; but the dreadful Revolution came, and the poor Comte and his wife were killed in Paris with the King and Queen, and the people of St. Jacques went mad like all the rest of France, and tried to burn down the Chateau and destroy all the property of those who had been so good to them. The Comte's brother had escaped, but he had almost starved in England. However, he came back at last, an old man, with a son, for he had married in England, but his wife was dead. After a great deal of trouble, they managed to get back some of the family estates. The present owner, the grandson of Monsieur Eustarde, the poor murdered Comte's brother, did not like the Chateau, and never came to St. Jacques; so it had gone to decay."

"But had no one lived in it since then?" demanded Roland.

"Ah yes; one day, about ten years back, the town was thrown into the greatest state of excitement by finding that the old Chateau

was inhabited by a young lady, two little girls, and a hard-featured woman called Jacqueline, who evidently was the domestic to the family. No one knew when they came, or who they were, except that the lady's name was Mrs. Horton, and that she was English and a widow, with two little girls, and slender means; but—would Monsieur believe it?—after staying eight years, they left us as suddenly as they arrived. Ah!" she remembered; "it was a few days after Monsieur had disappeared."

"And you have never heard anything about them since?"

"No, never. Was it not strange? Had Monsieur ever seen the lady when she was here?"

"Once; he had come upon three ladies sitting on the rocks, in one of his rambles along the coast."

"Then those were the same. Had he seen the lady's face?"

"Yes, he caught a glimpse of her, but could not at all remember what she was like."

"Then, after all, she could not be so wonderfully beautiful as Monsieur Alexandre said she was."

"She might have been," replied Roland in

an indifferent tone; "but it was not the style he admired. He preferred dark eyes and hair, and mignonne figures, to those tall blondes."

The hostess blushed, for she thought he meant her; but he was thinking of a very different type when he spoke of a fairy sylph-like form, quite the opposite of the little plump partridge one of Madame; and a pair of soft melting brown eyes, which bore not the slightest resemblance to the bright, hardy black orbs of the landlady of the "Lion d'Or." But Roland saw that she had taken his words as a compliment to herself, and he was too polite not to follow up the advantage. His maxim was—never make an enemy, when by a little flattery you can get a friend. "It costs nothing," he used to say; and he had found it, alas! but too successful with women in general.

Poor little Madame Duval was quite captivated by the Englishman who paid such charming compliments, and spoke her language with such facility, and there was nothing that lay in her power that she would not have done to make him comfortable; but, notwithstanding all her endeavours, he bade adieu to the "Lion d'Or" the day after the fore-

going conversation. She, poor thing, was melted to tears at his departure, and did not regain her usual spirits for some days.

Roland Weston made straight for the great metropolis, and there, as he said, "lost his identity among the crowd." He determined to find out Pauline; it was now one of the principal aims of his life. He was like a bloodhound on the track, following up the slightest clue with unremitting energy, but his searches always ended in disappointment. In the meantime, he took a humble lodging, the better to be concealed in, and fate guided him to the Maison Jones. What he found there to aid his search must be the subject of another chapter; so we will leave him for the present like a spider, weaving his web wherewith to trap his enemies.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT THE WAVES CAST ASHORE.

NIGHT was closing in round the old Combe House, which looked dismal enough in the day, but ten times more melancholy in the deepening gloom, as it stood out like some indistinct, grim spectre keeping guard over the sea, and warning mariners from its treacherous rocks. There was a storm brewing over the sea, which moaned and wailed as though singing a dirge for the poor sailors who might be engulphed ere morning woke. Above the roar of waves rose the scream of the sea birds, as they flew from the rocks, and hovered over the water, now sinking, now rising, and soaring far away till lost in the haze. But none of these sounds made any impression on the mistress of the gloomy mansion. She was alone in a top room of the house, commanding a view of the ocean. A light was placed in the

window, and the rays of the candle shone far out on the sea, like a small star.

She seemed anxious, and stopped every few moments, in her hurried walk backwards and forwards, to listen, but all sound within was lost in the noise of the gathering without. At last she went out of the room, leaving the beacon alight, and shutting the door carefully after her, descended to the sitting-room, which presented a cheerful aspect; the heavy curtains closed out the dark night, and the large fire shone out, making everything ruddy with its glow. Louie, Lola, Katie and Paul were seated round it, enjoying the warmth and light, while Jacqueline, looking much the same as ever, was at the table knitting. When Mrs. Horton entered, the elder woman took up her work and left the room. Mrs. Horton then seated herself in the centre of the fireside group.

"What are you talking about, children?" she said.

"Oh mamma," exclaimed Louie, "Paul was beginning to tell us the story of this house. Only fancy, it's haunted."

"Indeed!" said her mother, laughing; "and wherever did Paul hear such an interesting piece of news? Come, my dear, let me hear

this wonderful story, too. This is just the night for a tale of horrors, with the storm brewing outside, and the fire burning so bright and cheerful within. So now, Paul, begin," said his aunt, when she had taken the hand of her elder daughter in hers; "we are ready."

Thus encouraged, Paul began: "Now, aunt, you must promise not to laugh at it; but I heard the story the other day from old Dan. You know old Dan, the man who brings the fish?"

"Yes, we all know old Dan," said his aunt. "And what comes after that preface to your story, or rather I ought to say Dan's?"

"Here goes. This house," began Paul, with a grave face, "was built three hundred years ago."

"Really! how astonishing!"

"Now, aunt, that's too bad; you promised not to laugh."

"Forgive me, Paul, I will be very quiet."

"Three hundred years ago, by a Mr. Howard. This tract of land had been left to him by his wife's aunt, of the name of Tredethlyn. Here, with his wife and two sons, he escaped from Berkshire, where he had been subjected to dreadful persecution on account

of their refusing to embrace the Reformed faith. In those days Cornwall was like the end of the world, so that he managed to live the remainder of his life in safety, forgotten. He had in his flight secured all his money and jewels; these he had placed in the hands of a trusty friend, who was not troubled with the same scruples of conscience as Mr. Howard, for he had turned Protestant and gained favour; but in spite of his apostasy he was a staunch friend to many who still clung to the old faith of their fathers. Mr. Howard changed his name to Tredethlyn, and after some years built the old part of this house. He had many hiding-places in it, for he used to harbour the poor priests, who were hunted from pillar to post, like wild animals, in the time of good Queen Bess. Years rolled by, quiet and uneventful, until his two sons, who had been babies at the time of his flight, were become men. Percy, the elder by some two years, was a fine, frank, open-hearted fellow; Stephen was silent and taciturn, brooding over everything in gloomy silence, and there was a strange light in his dark eyes. When they were the respective ages of twenty-two and twenty, an old priest arrived one night with a young French girl, the daughter of a dear

friend of their father's in his young days. He had died and left his only child, Zoe, to the guardianship of Mr. Howard; and Father Lewis, the old priest, being anxious to gain the crown of martyrdom in England, for she had at that time the enviable reputation of conferring it on all Roman Catholics who fell into her hands, had volunteered to place the girl under Mr. Howard's, or rather, as he was now called, Mr. Tredethlyn's care.

"The brothers had always been the best of friends until the advent of this little French girl, who was destined to be instrumental in working such crime and sorrow. They both fell in love with her. She was not beautiful, but bright and sparkling, with winning manners, and soft gentle ways. She was a good girl enough, but weak, and a bit of a coquette. She liked the generous-hearted, handsome Percy; yet she could not resist leading on the reserved and gloomy Stephen, for he loved her with a passion which amounted to madness; but after a time Zoe became tired of the all-absorbing jealous adoration of the younger, and confessed her love for his brother.

"Stephen took the news more calmly than she expected, and all seemed going on well,

till within three days of the time fixed for the wedding, when the two brothers went out for a row in a boat, which was upset in sight of land; and, strange to relate, Percy, who was a splendid swimmer, was drowned, and Stephen managed to escape to the shore.

"There was great sorrow in Combe House, you may be sure; but no one seemed to grieve so much as Stephen. The body of Percy was not found for some days, when most singularly it was cast on the rocks, and then a very strange thing was discovered. The breast had been pierced by some sharp instrument; of course no one knew how it had come there, the only conjecture being that he must have struck on some sharp rock, in his struggle for life.

"From that day, Mrs. Tredethlyn avoided her remaining son, and seemed to shudder in his presence. She soon sank and died, and was buried with her first-born; but before she passed away, she desired to speak alone with Stephen, and when he came out of her room he was pale and trembling. However, time passed on, and Zoe consoled herself for the loss of Percy by marrying Stephen two years after the death of the former.

"Old Mr. Tredethlyn was gathered to his

fathers, and Stephen reigned in his stead. But life was not so full of joy at the Combe House; Stephen grew more taciturn, and had fits of most ungovernable rage, at times for nothing at all. Zoe grew dull and listless; her laugh, that used to be so bright and clear, was now seldom heard. But a stranger was at hand; a boy was born, and one year later another came into the world. The elder son was named Stephen. When the other was born, Zoe wished to call him after his uncle Percy, but the very mention of the name called forth such a burst of fury from her husband, that the poor woman shrank from him in fear. The boy was named Howard instead.

"Zoe never got over the horror she felt at her husband's violence, and whatever lingering feeling of love there might have been in her heart gave place to fear and distrust. Indeed, Stephen was growing each day more and more singular in his manner, that a gulf seemed to separate man and wife.

"Years rolled on at the Combe House; Elizabeth had gone to the grave, where the haughty queen and poorest beggar are equal; and though those of the old faith had still many terrible hardships to contend with, the

persecution was not so strong. Men had got a little tired of the chopping-block and gibbet, so the Catholics had breathing time. It was about this period that the son of the late Mr. Tredethlyn's friend (who had been so good to him in times of persecution) proposed paying a visit to Cornwall, and bringing his daughter with him. Zoe trembled at the idea, for her two sons were now of the same ages that Percy and Stephen had been when she first entered the family. The poor woman had a horrible suspicion, that she gathered from chance words let fall by her husband, when in one of his awful rages, that Percy had not come by his death by drowning. It was this agonizing dread that was lining her face, robbing her cheek of the glow of health, and turning her hair prematurely white, before she had reached middle age. Her two sons were like what her husband and his brother had been; the elder bright, laughing, and full of fun; the other studious, silent, and taciturn.

"Strange to say, Stephen loved his first son, so unlike himself, intensely; while he shrank from his black-browed younger boy. There was no love lost between father and son; both avoided each other as much as

possible. Sir George Selwyn, the expected visitor, came, as he informed them he would, accompanied by his daughter Mildred, who at once took a great fancy to young Stephen, called Howard a book-worm, and Zoe a poor miserable-looking creature for her age.

"Mildred was a quiet, sunny-haired girl, with soft blue eyes, and sweet manners. She soon gained the love of the young Stephen, and gave her heart freely in return. Both fathers gave their consent to the union, and for once the stream of true love seemed destined to run smooth. Mr. Tredethlyn took directly to Mildred; he could not bear her out of his sight, and appeared more cheerful in the fair girl's presence than his wife had seen him since their ill-omened marriage.

"At last the visit came to an end; young Stephen returning to Berkshire with Sir George and his daughter, where the marriage was to take place, after which the bride and bridegroom were to take up their abode at Combe House. Howard also was invited, but refused. When the young couple had departed, life was doubly dreary to poor Zoe, shut up with her gloomy husband and scarcely less gloomy son. Months passed by slowly

enough to her, when she received the news that Stephen and his wife were on their way home. Great preparations were made for their reception, because the Tredethlyns were rich. Their money had accumulated during their withdrawal from the world, and Mr. Tredethlyn determined to give a welcome to his new daughter worthy of her.

"While all was bustle and confusion in the house, Howard would wander away for hours and hours. He generally returned from these solitary excursions looking exhausted and haggard, as though he had gone through some fearful mental struggle. Mr. Tredethlyn, upon the arrival of his son and daughter-in-law, seemed quite an altered man. He became almost bright and gay, and poor Zoe welcomed the girl to her heart with all a mother's love. Nothing was good enough for Mildred, in her eyes; and it was impossible to tell who was the dearer to both mother and father, Stephen their own son, or his wife.

"Happiness at length appeared to dawn on Combe House. All were cheerful and content, with the exception of Howard, who got more and more silent than ever. His absences were longer and more frequent; he would be away for days, sometimes weeks at

a time, always returning with the same wearied look of exhaustion.

"Alas! a storm was brewing which was to overwhelm the unfortunate family. At present all seemed fair, but the tempest was near at hand.

"Mildred had been an inmate of Combe House a year when she presented to her husband twin sons. The joy of the inmates of the old house was at its height, and it was difficult to say which was most proud of the little strangers, Stephen or his father.

"Howard was absent when the children were born, and they were six weeks old when he returned.

"It would have been plain to see that he was very strange in his manners if everyone had not been so occupied with the infants and their mother, who was now of more importance than ever in the eyes of Zoe and her husband, and left no time to think of the son for whom they had never much cared.

"The evening after his arrival piercing screams were heard coming from Mildred's room. She had not felt very well, and had retired to rest early before the others. Her husband was the first to recognize his wife's voice, and rushed up to see what was the

matter, closely followed by his father and Zoe, who had a wild dread at her heart she could not account for.

"When they entered, a sight met their eyes that froze their blood, and for the moment struck them spell-bound. Sweet Mildred lay dead—strangled—while Howard, a raving maniac, stood beside the poor corpse, waving off all intruders.

"'See,' he said, 'my Mildred. Now she will come with me to the cave and leave you all. I have waited for you so long, darling,' he said, apostrophizing the dead girl. 'Why were you so cruel? Off! off! I say!' as the servants approached to secure him; 'she is mine now.'

"With a yell more like a wild beast's than anything human, Mr. Tredethlyn threw himself on his son, and a most fearful struggle ensued between the two; but presently the arms of the elder man relaxed, and a stream of blood gushed from his side. The madman had stabbed him. He was seized, however, by the servants, and then all attention was turned to Mr. Tredethlyn, who was dying. His wife knelt by his side, while poor young Stephen was lying insensible by poor Mildred's body.

"'Quick, Zoe!' said the dying man; 'I have not many moments to live. I must unburden my mind of a fearful secret. It was I who killed Percy for love of you. I thought if he were out of the way you would care for me. I fought against my passion until it made me mad. Yes, Zoe, I have been a madman all these years, although no one guessed it. My mother,' continued the man with labouring breath, 'suspected that I had killed her darling, and on her death-bed called me in. Then it was she taxed me with the crime, and threatened that if ever I married you our offspring should be cursed. When Mildred came I thought that her goodness would have removed the curse, but see it has fallen alike on the innocent and the guilty.' With these words Mr. Tredethlyn died.

"When Stephen awoke from his swoon he was a different man. His heart was broken, although he struggled to live for the sake of his children. Poor Zoe never knew a moment's peace after that dreadful day, for she always believed that it was her coquetry that caused all the sorrow and misery. Howard lived some years up in that strong room at the top of the house, but one day he managed to escape, and was found some time

after in a cave about four miles distant quite dead. The boys grew up, and the curse had apparently died out, but it reappeared in their children, and so it has gone on, until the last of the race, who lived here before we came. He killed himself in a fit of madness, and now the whole family is extinct. What do you think of my story?"

"It is enough to give us all the nightmare for months to come," replied Mrs. Horton; "but who is the ghost that haunts the house?"

"Zoe. She walks, the fishermen say, every night, as a punishment for her coquetry, and the last of the race who committed suicide is seen at the window."

"In my opinion I think it is too bad poor Zoe should be obliged to perambulate in the cold instead of sleeping comfortably in her grave, while the real criminals are left in peace."

"Oh, mamma, don't talk like that," said Louie, shuddering; "I cannot bear you to laugh at such dreadful things."

"Why, you little goose, I declare you are frightened," said Mrs. Horton, putting her arm round her daughter and drawing her closely to her side. "If you please, Paul, you

must not tell any more horrors to my birdie, or she will be afraid to be left alone. And you, Katie, has Paul's ghostly legend affected your nerves? you look pale, my child."

"Ah no, not at all. I was only thinking how cruel it seems that poor Zoe should have to pay such a severe penalty for such a little sin. I think she suffered enough in her lifetime without having to expiate it after her death. I should not be at all frightened to meet her, and ask why she walks. And they do say, you know, that if anybody can be found to speak to the poor spirit, and it can tell its sorrows, why then it will rest in peace."

"Katie, Katie! you never mean to tell me, child, that you believe such nonsense. I had no idea that there were two such little geese in the house as Louie and yourself, or I should have forbidden such silly stories. However, now I have discovered that you children are superstitious, I must beg Paul never to talk on the subject of ghosts, warnings, and all the ridiculous paraphernalia again. For shame, children! I thought you had more sense than to believe such old women's tales. Look at Lola; she does not attach any credit to goblins, sprites, etc., I'll be bound, do you?"

"No," replied the girl, "I don't believe that people are allowed to wander about after death for the simple pleasure of frightening those with whom they have not the slightest connection; if I am not to be alarmed till I meet a ghost, I never shall be in my life. I should be much more afraid of one enemy in the flesh than a thousand unquiet spirits."

"I am sure you have so much strength of character," replied her mother; but though she praised her younger daughter, she caressed Louie's sunny head.

"Hark! what is that?" said Paul, starting up.

Every ear was strained, and in a minute, above the noise of the tempest, they distinguished the signal of a vessel in distress.

"There it is again; I will go and see."

"No," said Mrs. Horton, pale as a marble statue, "you remain where you are. It is better for me to go and see what is the matter."

Paul crimsoned red, and the tears stood in his eyes, for he thought she alluded to his lameness, on which subject he was very sensitive. Mrs. Horton, in spite of her agitation, saw she had wounded the boy's feelings.

"Paul, dear," she said, laying her white hand on his shoulder, "forgive me, I did not mean to vex you; I will send for you if there is anything to be done, for I know you can row a boat as well as any of the fishermen. I only ask you to remain here till I see if there is anything to do."

So saying, she left the room hastily, and ran upstairs with eager steps to the top of the house, till she reached the apartment where she had placed the candle.

"Jacqueline," she said to the woman, who was peering anxiously into the darkness, "do you see anything?"

"Yes, Pauline, in the flash of lightning just now I saw a ship—there it is again!" as a momentary gleam rent, as it were, for a moment the clouds, and discovered a ship labouring in the storm. At the same time a shrill whistle was heard.

"Then it is not the 'Vengeance' out in that plight after all; I feared it was. Run, Jacqueline, and bring him here. Thank God he has arrived."

Jacqueline needed no second order, but sped on the wings of the wind, and in a few moments returned with no other than Captain Paul.

"Well," he said, "I am all safe, you see, thanks to your beacon. 'La Vengeance' is at anchor in the little cove the other side of the rocks, and the men on the look-out, for we shall have a prize to-night, or I am much mistaken; all the cargo is being unloaded, and can be carried up into the caves to-night. Have you told Paul about my trade, and those other little matters?"

"Only partly. But what is the matter, you look so anxious?"

"Pauline, prepare yourself for a great shock—you did not kill Roland Weston when you pushed him off the rocks."

"Thank God!" ejaculated Jacqueline.

"I saw him fall, and saved him—not for the sake of mercy, though—Captain Paul has not the reputation for that sort of thing—but that I might have a long and lasting revenge; I imprisoned him in a cave—one of our hiding places—where he has been two years, and where I intended he should remain until death released him—but he has escaped!"

"What!" exclaimed Pauline—"not dead! and at liberty! Then we have a sleuth-hound on our track! But hark! there is that signal again. Come, let us see what can be done," and the three descended by a staircase, only

used by Jacqueline and Mrs. Horton, leading to the back of the house out on to the rocks.

Several fishermen had already assembled on the shore, and the party from the house was respectfully greeted. The lady of the "Old Combe House," as the men called her, was well-known among them, for she had gone on another tack here, and appeared among them, and visited the poor. The inhabitants of Saltcombe were very poor, so to them a wreck was a prize, although it was no new thing on that part of the coast; they called themselves fishermen, but in reality, when times were extra hard, and the weather foul, and fortune threw a ship in their way, they turned wreckers.

"There she is," exclaimed several eager voices, as the doomed vessel was seen like a great monster hurrying and drifting on to the rocks; wave upon wave swept over her, each time carrying off some of her wretched crew, as they hopelessly clung to the ropes and spars scattered on deck. With a terrible blow her timbers were staved in, coming in contact with a huge rock; the waters surged in, and all was over; no trace remained but a few shattered pieces of wood, which were

tossed and tumbled on the crest of the waves. I fear little was thought among the wreckers about those who were hurried into eternity before their eyes. They were thinking of what the waves would be likely to wash up.

"Oh! this is horrible," said Mrs. Horton, looking with disgust on the callous wretches eager for their prey; "can nothing be done to save those poor creatures?"

"No, marm," answered one of the men, "they are pretty well all in Davy Jones's locker by this time—but look! there's summat coming. Lor, if it ain't a man!"

Captain Paul had seen the dark object, and its frantic efforts to reach the shore, and without a moment's delay tied a rope round his waist, giving the ends of it to the men on shore, and plunged into the sea. It was a boiling, seething mass, which threatened to engulf him, but he was a bold swimmer, and struck out bravely; he was continually cast back, and dashed, bruised and bleeding, on shore; but his courage was undaunted, and, making another and another great effort, he succeeded in clutching hold of the hair of the man, just as, exhausted and powerless, he was giving up his chance of life, and was going

down into the watery grave where all his companions had perished. Captain Paul seized him by the hair, just as he was on the point of sinking, and managed to bring him ashore. It was a noble act, and even the wreckers, debased as they were, could not avoid a murmur of approbation at the strange gentleman's courage.

"Come," he said, "let us return to the house; we can do no good here, and we had better take this poor fellow with us," pointing to the now miserable form of the man he had just rescued. "Here, Jacqueline, lend a hand," and taking up the stranger, who was slight and small, in his arms, he carried him like an infant, Jacqueline having carefully wrapped the insensible man in a thick shawl.

They entered the house the way they had left it, but Mrs. Horton saw that Lola was watching for their return; secrecy being now out of the question, she told her to run and tell the others that they were bringing a stranger, "who was just saved from drowning, the vessel he came in being completely broken up on the rocks."

The girl did as she was bid, and heralded the approach of Captain Paul and the stranger, so that when he entered, dripping wet, bearing

his insensible burden, the others were prepared.

"Lay him on the sofa by the fire," said Mrs. Horton; "and now, Lola, run and get one of the blankets off the beds; Katie, fetch the brandy, and Paul look to your father."

But the boy was already clasped in his arms. All were busy in helping to restore the stranger to animation, and had the satisfaction of seeing him open his eyes in a few moments after various restoratives had been applied; but he soon sank into a dreamless kind of sleep, brought on from exhaustion; and, leaving him under the care of Jacqueline, the rest of the family retired to rest. But sleep did not visit the couch of many of the inmates of the Old Combe House that night; Mrs. Horton was lying awake thinking of her enemy's escape, and the imprudence of bringing the stranger beneath her roof. Captain Paul was planning how to get Roland into his hands again; Jacqueline, thanking heaven that Pauline was free from the stain of actual murder; and Lola, conjuring up the face of the stranger, who quite reached her ideal of beauty; while Paul was pondering over the unexpected appearance of his

father, and his gallant conduct, which exalted him more than ever in his romantic ideas. Louie and Katie alone slept the sleep of the innocent.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. JONES'S LODGER.

"THERE you are again, drat you! If I have to speak to you once more, it'll be the worse for you—letting things fall like that! Do you think I am made of money, you lazy, idle, good-for-nothing girl, you! Oh, dear! oh, dear! I don't know who would be bothered with bits of drabs of servant girls; why it would pay me to keep a first-rate cook instead of slaving myself to death out of the things you break. You've no gratitude in you! Didn't I take you from the workhouse, and bring you here to a comfortable home, where you have all heart can desire—and what work have you, I should like to know? A mere nothing; only to wait on the gentleman upstairs, who gives no trouble at all, make the beds, run errands, mind baby, answer the door, and keep the

house tidy; and yet you find it hard. A pretty thing, indeed! If you were in some places, you'd find it very different, I can tell you, with your fal-lal ways. Don't answer me, because that's a thing I will not stand. Now go and see what Mr. Brown wants, for there's his bell ringing."

The foregoing little speech was being made in the kitchen of the Maison Jones, where poor Katie had spent such a bitter apprenticeship, by the mistress of that establishment, whose ire had been considerably aroused by the depravity exhibited by her small maidservant, in letting fall a valuable china ornament, consisting of a very diminutive gentleman in a bright blue coat and pink trousers, taking an airing on a goat of colossal proportions, and holding on tightly by the horns of the animal, as if unaccustomed to such exercise. The poor little drudge gazed ruefully on the fragments scattered around her, rubbing her grimy knuckles and her coarse apron into her eyes, until she received a good shake from Mrs. Jones, and was dismissed upstairs to attend to the lodger.

Mrs. Jones had not improved, either in looks or in temper, since we last had the pleasure of seeing her. She had never been able to re-

place that ungrateful little monster, devoid of all natural family affection, as she called the unfortunate child, to her dearest friends, Mrs. Green, the wife of the water-rate collector, and Mrs. Robbem, whose husband was clerk to the great firm of Cheetham, Bambousalem, Grindwell & Co., outfitters, in the City.

"What I did for that child," she would say, "tongue cannot tell; but there, we must not expect for any reward in this world."

At this Mrs. Robbem, who was of a religious turn of mind, as befitted the wife of an employé in such a godly firm as Cheetham, Bambousalem, Grindwell & Co., would turn up the balls of her eyes until nothing but the whites were visible, and give vent to a series of groans, highly expressive of that good lady's disapprobation at the sinful conduct of that lost and abandoned creature, Katie.

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Jones; but what can we expect from a child of wrath, and an inheritor of the kingdom of darkness?"

This was what she designated the innocent child, who had to suffer for the sins of others. But then Mrs. Robbem was a most virtuous lady, who would not have touched a poor fallen sister, to save her from perdition. She was one of those excessively moral persons

who look with such horror on vice, that they would never let an unfortunate have a single chance of salvation. No, no; once stray from the path of virtue, and you must never come back. No matter if the poor woman were more sinned against than sinning, and fell through pure, unselfish love; she was a bold, abandoned creature, in Mrs. Robbem's eyes, and must remain so to the "end of the chapter." There was no hope for her in this world, nor even in the next. Of course she was much more lenient to the men; these sort of women always are. It was never their fault: "Oh dear, no; but the girls who encouraged them."

She had heard the story of Ellie from her dear friend, Mrs. Jones, who had unbosomed herself to her of the dreadful wrong inflicted on her by Mr. Jones, in bringing his broken-hearted, dying sister, and her child, under the same roof with her immaculate self, and had been duly condoled with.

Poor, miserable, repentant Ellie did not live long, but passed away to another, and let us hope a better, world, where her sins and faults were washed away by the tears of repentance. Katie had been left to bear the brunt of the fight, as our readers know, until Captain Paul

rescued her. She was no favourite with Mrs. Robbem; for once, when that godly woman was reviling the child's dead mother, according to her boundless charity, and putting the broken-hearted woman, now sleeping peacefully, forward as a warning to her child, Katie had astonished the woman by the passionate way she had defended her mother's memory; hence Mrs. Robbem had always prophesied the eternal ruin of the child, and was never weary of abusing her, in a religious and highly moral way of course, but still abusing her.

Mrs. Jones, after Katie's departure, tried several little slaveys, but without finding one like the patient, ill-used child who had escaped from her power. At last she went to the workhouse, and there she was fortunate enough to get the unlucky subject of the domestic tableau described at the commencement of the chapter. The girl went up to see what it was that Mrs. Jones's new lodger wanted. He was a tall, slender man, with hair and whiskers of such a vivid black, as to suggest the probability of dye. His whole appearance, too, denoted, in spite of plain, not to say shabby dress, a position in life somewhat above the highly respectable, but hardly aristocratic quarter he was now in. The little

maid who, with her red swollen eyes, and voice not yet quite free, notwithstanding all her efforts, from sounds of grief, stood awaiting his commands in an attitude very expressive of awe at his imposing appearance.

"Oh, I rang to know who this book belonged to?" said the lodger, holding up a small volume with the name of Paul Noir, in large letters, on the cover.

"I don't know, sir, but I'll ask missis," said the girl, glad to get away from the presence of the man with the white face and inky locks.

Mrs. Jones, summoned by her handmaiden from the depths of her kitchen, where she had been superintending the cooking of the family dinner, wreathed her hot, vinegar face in smiles, and entered her lodger's room.

"Jane tells me you wish to see me, Mr. Brown," she said, in a smirking voice.

"Ah, Mrs. Jones; take a chair, pray? I am so sorry to trouble you for such a trifle."

"No trouble, I assure you, sir; indeed, quite a pleasure to do anything for you."

"It's rather absurd, but I was so struck by the name Paul Noir, on the cover of this book, that I could not resist the curiosity to know who he was, and if he lived here?"

"Yes, sir, Mr. Noir (or, as Mrs. Jones pronounced it, Mr. Noah) was a former lodger. He lived here; or rather I should say his son, a lame boy, lived here; for Mr. Noir being a seafaring man, only came at odd times like. He was very fond of his son, and they behaved shamefully to me, and enticed my niece away; just as she was getting useful to me in the house, too."

"What was Mr. Noir like, and was his name Paul, too?"

"That I don't know, sir; but as far as looks went, he was not bad. Not that I admire those yellow-haired men" (with an admiring look at her lodger's black locks), "but there's some that does, and to them I've no doubt he was a handsome man."

"Fair, you say?" inquired the lodger.

"Yes, very fair; with blue eyes, and white teeth."

"Take a glass of wine, Mrs. Jones," he said, pouring some out of an ugly little decanter that decorated the sideboard of the apartment. "I am getting quite interested in your account of Mr. Noir. So he enticed your niece away?"

"Yes, sir," said Mrs. Jones, who dearly loved a gossip, more especially when she had

had a glass of wine to loose her tongue. "My husband's niece, rather, if such a child can have any relations, not having any legal father."

"Ah! so, your husband's niece was not of very respectable parentage?"

"No, sir; her mother—a poor, good-for-nothing, idle, vain piece of goods—was always being stuck up by her father and brother that she was such a beauty. Not that I ever saw much beauty in her—a pale, sickly-looking thing, with her quiet, sly ways. I always thought she'd never come to any good, turning up her nose at respectable people; and no more she did. She ran away with some gentleman, and was never heard of till, some years after, she came here with her child to die. Serve her right, too, I say, a good-for-nothing creature, bringing disgrace on a respectable family. Her fine gentleman had left her, and she was too proud, forsooth, to ask him to support her; but not too proud, as I told her, to come to her soft-hearted fool of a brother, who had a wife and children to keep of his own, let alone the impudence of expecting to be allowed to live under the same roof with me, who never had a blemish on my character. And so I told her; but my

husband must needs take the shameful thing's part, and say while he had a roof she should share it, and if I objected I might leave, but she shouldn't. Oh! what I had to suffer! But she didn't live long, that was one comfort! However, there was her brat—excuse me, sir, but it makes me so mad, when I think of all I have gone through, because of that girl, that it makes me lose my temper."

"Oh, of course, of course; I understand, quite natural. But you were saying that Mr. Noir enticed the young woman away," said Mr. Brown, who was getting secretly impatient at the long dissertation on the faults of Mr. Jones and his sister.

"La, bless you, she wasn't a young woman; why she couldn't have been more than twelve years old when she left two years ago."

"Two years ago!" repeated the man; "and where did he take her?"

"Ah, that, sir, I don't know, any further than he directed the cabman to Oxford Street. But let me see—there is something I never thought of before—perhaps he went to the Hôtel de France, wherever that is. What makes me say that is, that once I saw on a bit of old letter, 'Captain Noah, Hôtel de France.' The name of the street was torn

away, but it had the London post-mark, and so must be somewhere in London."

"Very true, Mrs. Jones, but that part of the story does not interest me. I was only curious to find out what kind of a person it was who owned so singular a name. Thank you very much for your amusing little history, and I quite feel for you losing your niece at such a useful age."

The tone was mocking and sarcastic, but Mrs. Jones, although a shrewd woman, did not detect that her lodger was ironical in his condolences, so answered in good faith:

"Ah, sir, you may well say that. I have not been able to find one so useful as she was, for although Katie was a good-for-nothing, ungrateful little baggage, she was very handy about a house."

"What was your niece's name?"

"Katherine, sir; but we called her Katie."

"Quite a pretty name, and a most romantic history. No doubt some day you will have Miss Katie driving up to the door in a grand carriage, having found her long-lost father, and repaying you a thousand-fold for your tender care of her orphan years."

There was such a strange tone in the lodger's voice that Mrs. Jones turned to see if

he were laughing at her. It sounded uncomfortably like it; but no, his face wore a perfectly serious expression. Yet, notwithstanding, Mrs. Jones left the room in an unpleasant frame of mind. That last remark about Katie's finding her father annoyed her. Suppose the child should be rich some day, then what would she not have lost? But "no," she said, "it's too ridiculous. She's much more likely to die on a dust-heap than find a fortune."

Do not be so sure of that, Mrs. Jones; there are stranger things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

After Mrs. Jones had left, her lodger sat for some moments thinking. There was a sardonic expression on his face which made him look more like a ghoul than a human being.

"Ah, but I will have a bonnie revenge! So you have a son you dote on. Then it shall be through him as well as the dainty Pauline you shall suffer. It is rather singular about that Kate. Can it be that——but what nonsense am I thinking of? the child perished with the mother that night. Jones is not a very uncommon name," he laughed. "Plenty of the daughters of that house have loved

'Not Wisely but too Well' besides poor Ellie. I have a good mind to call back that sour-faced hag and ask the name of the husband's sister whom she gave such a charming portrait of. But pshaw! Ellie and her little one are sleeping the sleep that knows no waking. Why did I not see myself that sodden, dripping heap they told me was a woman who was found dead below Westminster, and did I not recognize her by her long hair and shawl? That dripping figure haunts me even now. I shall never be able to get rid of it as long as I live, therefore what mad freak am I getting into my brain? No, no, Mr. Brown, you have something else to do than hunt up nameless children of the Jones family. Let me see, what shall be the programme? First to find the Hôtel de France—no doubt in the neighbourhood of Soho; it is there principally where names of that sort abound." So saying, he wrapped himself in a large overcoat and sallied forth.

Once out of the immediate vicinity of Prince of Wales' Terrace, as the row of houses where Mrs. Jones' residence was situated was called, he hired a cab and drove to Oxford Street. Arrived there, he dismissed his growler, and walked on to a street leading

into Soho. But he was more than an hour wandering up and down that to him heretofore unknown locality, and had almost given up his search in despair, when he saw a small, narrow street without any thoroughfare. He was half a mind not to go down, but he thought it stupid to leave without exploring all parts, and was rewarded for his pains. Near the end of the row was a tall, melancholy-looking house, with Hôtel de France painted on the outside. At last he had found it. Taking out his pocket-book, he put down the name of the street and then hurried forth from the gloomy neighbourhood into Piccadilly.

"I don't think anyone will recognize me," he said, as he turned into a first-class restaurant and ordered a good dinner. "Step number two taken. Oh, but the work goes bravely on! Ah, ah! my friends, I am on the track!" and his satisfaction was so great that he laughed aloud, to the great astonishment of a quiet, elderly gentleman, who was taking his dinner at a neighbouring table.

CHAPTER XIII.

"COMING SHADOWS."

"AND so, Issie, you have never heard anything of Roland since his most mysterious disappearance."

"No, darling, and I feel sure the poor fellow was murdered that night, when I thought I saw him with the blood on his forehead by the Fairies' Dell. We advertised, and did everything that we possibly could to find him, but without avail, so we at last gave up seeking for him, and put on mourning, feeling certain that he was no longer an inhabitant of this world."

"For my part, Issie, I fear that Roland is not an angel yet, and that he will turn up some day to plague you and Herbert."

"Fie, Bella, to talk so."

"Well, darling, I won't, if you don't like it, but you know I never did like or trust that

man, and something seems to tell me that he has not yet passed out of the world."

"He could do me no harm, you know, dear, even if, as you think, he is really alive, which I most sincerely pray may be the case, poor fellow."

"Ah, Issie! I am not so good as you, and I cannot help hoping that he will never come back again, for I have a presentiment that if he does he will work you no good, my sweet sister. Now, don't laugh at my silly fancies, but listen; did not Roland offer you his hand?"

"Yes, he did."

"And then you refused him and accepted his elder brother, and to crown all you bring Master Willy into the world to cut him out of the estates and title. It would have been difficult for a good man to bear all this with patience. Roland not only fell into the rôle of brother-in-law to the woman he loved, but saw the inheritance snatched from him with a smile, as though he rather liked it, and was the first to congratulate Herbert on the birth of a son. This conduct appeared very charming, but unfortunately it was not natural, and to one of Roland's character perfectly impossible, unless it were done for some purpose.

You—dear, sweet, good little thing that you are—were hoodwinked at once, and honest old Herbert believed all his protestations, as though they had been sincere. But not so your humble servant. You remember I was here at the time of Willie's *début*, and had an opportunity of judging the disinterested brother. He did not think it worth while to be always on his guard before me, as he looked upon me as a young bread-and-butter miss; but I saw the frown and wicked look in his deceitful eyes when he thought no one was watching. From that I drew my own conclusion, and that was that he was acting a part."

"Rella, darling, you are prejudiced against him; but, poor fellow, whether or no your charges be true, he is dead now, so let all his shortcomings be forgotten."

"Amen to that, Issie, and God grant that he may never turn up to cause you and Herbert sorrow."

This conversation between the sisters was after Willie had gone to bed, and while Sir Herbert was smoking his cigar, before joining the ladies.

It will be seen that Roland Weston had never been a favourite with Muriel; the generous, noble-hearted, clever woman saw through

his artifices, and mistrusted him accordingly. Just at this juncture Sir Herbert came up to the sisters, so there was no further means of carrying on their *tête-à-tête* for the present.

"Let us have some music, Rella," he said.

"Yes, do sing something, darling," said Lady Weston. "I will go and ask Miss Cross if she would like to come down this evening;" and so saying, she left the room and ran lightly upstairs to fetch the governess.

"What an angel Issie is, Herbert; why she gets more and more unlike an inhabitant of this world every time I see her."

"You don't think her looking ill, do you?" said Sir Herbert, his face getting pale at the simple thought of anything happening to his wife.

"No, no, Herbert—on the contrary, I think her looking remarkably well; but I was speaking of her nature."

"Oh! yes. You gave me such a dreadful start; I thought you saw a difference in her that I, being constantly with her, could not see. You are quite sure, Rella, you don't think Issie looks delicate?"

"Not at all, Herbert; I assure you that you may believe me, for I would not deceive you—but here she is," as Lady Weston and the governess entered.

"I prevailed on Miss Cross to give us the pleasure of her company to-night, you see. Allow me to introduce you to my sister, Mrs. Curtise," said Lady Weston.

Rella bowed, and then turned to the piano.

"Wherever did Issie pick up that wonderful specimen of an old maid?" she thought; and certainly Miss Cross's appearance challenged the remark; she might have been any age ranging from thirty to fifty—tall, and largely built, gaunt and bony, her fine, thin hair of an indescribable colour, was dressed in French rolls, over two immense pads, which made her head look like a large soup-plate at the back, while in the front it gave the impression that she had ornamented her face with a border of huge, dark, drab sausages: her forehead was high and broad, showing intellect; her nose and mouth were large, but not badly formed, and her eyes were of light grey, shrewd, clever, and honest; her costume, perhaps, more befitted a woman many years younger; yet, in spite of all drawbacks, the governess's face interested Rella after the first glance. "That woman," she decided, "has got something in her, although she does make herself a ridiculous guy."

And she was right. Miss Cross had sterling qualities, notwithstanding her foibles, of which youthful dressing was one. There was no romance in her history; it was the usual every-day life. She had been the eldest daughter of a surgeon, with a large family; she had been educated for a governess: since the age of twenty up till the present time, when she numbered thirty years, her life had proved the usual unsympathetic routine, until she had entered the family of the Westons, some two years back. Since that time her lot had been a sunny one. Lady Weston saw her worth, and treated her as one of the family. Sir Herbert was always cordial and gentlemanly. Moreover, she loved her high-spirited, wilful, daring pupil dearly, so Miss Cross was very happy at Weston Park.

"Now, will you sing us something, Clara?" said Lady Weston, addressing the governess after Rella had finished a pretty ballad.

"She can never sing, surely?" thought Rella, making up her mind for some dreadful piping infliction.

What was her surprise when the singular-looking old maid poured forth such a glorious volume of sound, that she was fairly entranced; her face, fantastic head-gear, and

dress, all were forgotten in hearing that splendid voice. Unattractive, Miss Cross had a gift more fascinating than the greatest beauty; but not only was it that her voice was magnificent and well trained, but she sang with the inspiration of genius—you forgot the woman as you listened; her face became positively radiant as she sang, as if it gave her intense and exquisite pleasure, and carried her far away from this world and its surroundings into the happy realms of the Imagination.

The song over, the bright look vanished, only to reappear faintly in comparison with what it has been when Rella went up and took the large, though well-shaped hands in her own, and said, with tears in her eyes:

"Thank you for the greatest treat I have ever had; you have a glorious voice, but what is more, you are an *artiste* in the highest sense of the word."

"Shall I sing again, then?" asked the gratified woman.

This time it was a wild, weird German legend; at one time thrilling its hearers by its singular beauty, and the next moment filling their eyes with tears at its exquisite pathos. But all pleasure must have an end;

so Miss Cross left the piano, and sank once more into the unattractive, strangely dressed governess.

"Can it be possible," thought Rella, as she gazed on the ordinary features of Miss Cross, "that this is the same woman who, five minutes ago, poured forth such glorious melody,—that common-place person the inspired genius! Well, well, wonders will never cease. I am introduced to a plain, badly-dressed old maid, and lo! she turns into an Alboni before my very eyes, and then sinks back again to her former self. I shall begin to think that Issie is really the queen of the fairies, and has been bewitching me."

"Miss Cross, I never heard such a rich contralto voice in my life," said Rella, taking a seat beside the governess. "Pardon me, but whatever made you become a governess, when you might have been the queen of song? For my part, I can think of no position in the world so enviable as *prima donna*."

The face again lighted up with the brilliant light, as she listened to the praises of Rella.

"Do you really think, Mrs. Curtise, that I, with my unattractive appearance, could ever

attain the position your kindness would have me believe?"

"I am sure of it, Miss Cross," Rella replied. "If you wish to entertain the idea, Mr. Curtise knows the director of the Grand Opera in Berlin. He is coming to pay us a visit in a week, or when we return home, and we shall be most happy to introduce him to you, and see if I am a false prophet, when I say that in less than two years you will be a bright particular star in the musical world."

After a time, Miss Cross withdrew to dream of the brilliant future that Rella had foretold, and the sisters were again left alone; for Sir Herbert had gone for a stroll in the park, to smoke his last cigar before going to bed, instead of on the terrace, as was his wont; because he thought his wife and Rella would enjoy a tête-à-tête.

"So, darling, you really must leave in the morning?" asked Lady Weston, as she and her sister rose and walked out in the moonlight.

"Yes, Issie; what would poor Letty do without me—not to mention Lloyd? Yes, dear, I really must go."

"Well, I suppose I have no right to com-

plain, for I have had you to myself the whole of this afternoon. Oh, I do so wish, Rella, you lived nearer. I so long for your bright, sweet face, sometimes. But I am a most ungrateful woman to talk like this, when I am more blessed than anybody in the world, I do believe. You know, darling, we are never content, and the more we have, the more we want. It is human nature, I suppose."

"Now we are alone, Issie, I wish to ask you something. I have a presentiment that some trouble is at hand. Now, will you promise that, should anything occur, you will send for me without delay? I know, dear sister, it seems the height of folly, anything happening to the happy wife of rich Sir Herbert Weston; but forgive me, sister mine, and promise me what I ask."

"Certainly Rella, child; but I cannot make it out, my strong-minded Rella giving way to presentiments. If it had been me, now, the case would have been different, but you——"

"Yes, yes, darling, it's very stupid and weak-minded on my part, but I cannot help it. To tell you the truth, it was this miserable feeling that made me come over. I could not rest till I had seen you with my

own eyes; even now, I cannot shake off the feeling of oppression. Not that I want to affect you, my darling, with a fit of the blues. Most likely, my liver is out of order."

Lady Weston could not resist laughing merrily at that last solution her sister gave. "Perhaps it is, Rella; at any rate, we will settle it so, and dismiss this doleful conversation. Now, tell me, do you think Miss Cross will really make a figure in the musical world? She has a fine voice, certainly; but her appearance, style, her *tout ensemble,* is so very much against her, when there are so very many lovely women in that sphere of life to contend with, that I should have thought it madness for her to enter into the lists with them."

"Not at all, Issie. Did you notice her face when she was singing? No, of course you did not; you would not have called her plain, then. In spite of her ludicrous. old-fashioned way of dressing her hair, and her unattractive features, she looked splendid; in any great operatic character she would make a grand success. Of course she could never play light, sparkling rôles, but in such a part as Azucena in 'Il Trovatore,' or indeed anything that would give sufficient scope to her genius, she

would be a star of the first magnitude. I really mean what I say, and if I can help her to gain a position I shall be delighted. You know when Lloyd was travelling in Germany, before our marriage, he made the acquaintance of a most charming man, and was able to render him some trifling service which made them fast friends. The gentleman turned out to be the director of the Grand Opera at Berlin; he has often talked of coming to see Lloyd, and be introduced to me, but something has always occurred to prevent his so doing, till the present time, when he has fixed for the week after next, for certain, to pay us a visit; so we are going to cut short our stay with the Lincolns, on purpose to be at home to receive him. I shall therefore want you to let Miss Cross come to me; he shall hear her sing, and then see if, after that, she does not do all and more than I say."

"Well, Rella, your programme seems a good one, and I suppose I had better look out at once for another governess for Wilfred; but darling, I do hope sincerely that your kind plans will succeed. How good you are! and how much your active, noble nature puts to the blush my idle, selfish life!"

"Hush, Issie, how can you talk such nonsense? Idle, selfish life, indeed—when you never in all your life considered such a person as self. I will not allow you to say such things, sister; it sounds very like a sarcasm, and did I not know you, I should take it as such: you, who are almost an angel, talking of the goodness of a self-willed, passionate, impulsive woman like myself. You had better not let Herbert hear you calling yourself idle and selfish. Ah! here he comes; and I shall tell him what you say, for you deserve a punishment. Here, Herbert, come and scold this wife of yours; she says she is idle and selfish, and I know not what other dreadful things."

"How shall I punish her, Rella?" said Sir Herbert, looking down on his wife's upturned face. "In the first place, I shall make her go in the drawing-room, for it is cold on the terrace; and in the next, put up with my society as a penance. Do you think that will be severe enough for once?"

"To judge from Issie's face, I should say the punishment was not a hard one to bear; indeed, rather the reverse. But to see you, I declare one would think that you had been just married, if it were not for Wilfred. When

are you going to get like sensible people?" laughed Rella; "or are you going to live all your life in 'La lune de miel?'"

"Hear her, Issie; it is all very well for her to talk, is it not? She's jealous because Lloyd is not here, that's all," said Sir Herbert.

"Oh, indeed! I like that, trying to attack me, to defend yourself; that's awfully cowardly. But never mind, I forgive you, on condition that you scold Issie for what she has been saying; but I shall not stay to hear the lecture, so good-night."

And Muriel left the husband and wife alone.

"What have you been talking about, darling, to make you look so serious?" asked Sir Herbert, when the door had closed on Rella.

"Oh, nothing of importance, Herbert; but Rella has got some silly presentiment into her clear head, that something is going to happen to cause me trouble."

"You, wifie mine? I hope not. At any rate, it must strike me first. But, pet, you must not let Rella's fancies disturb you."

"I don't; but then, you see, Rella is not given to fancies. And do you know, she does not believe that Roland is dead."

"I wish, there, that she could be right. Poor old Roly, I would give much to see him again; but I fear there is no chance. No, Issie love, my brother is dead, I feel certain; if not, what can have become of him? Why should he hide himself all this time, when there was no earthly reason. If he was in debt, he knew he had only to apply to me, and I would have done all I could to have helped him. No, no, depend upon it, my poor brother is no longer in this world. Besides, if such a thing were to happen as his return, from the grave, as it were, how could that affect you, darling, except to give you pleasure? So you see you must not let Rella's 'presentiments,' or whatever they are, make you down-hearted. Now, darling, it is time to go to bed, I think; but mind you don't dream of the terrible 'presentiment' of Aunt Rella."

Soon Weston Park was wrapped in slumber; the moon looked down on that peaceful scene, as she pursued her course high in the heavens, tinting everything with her silvery light, and making it into an earthly paradise! Alas! ere a few months passed, what changes were to happen to those now sleeping so calmly. Their sleep would not have been so

undisturbed, had they been able to glance for one moment into the book of fate; but they were mercifully spared the knowledge of what was in store for them. The blow was even now at hand, which was to crush and destroy them, and crumble to dust the temple of domestic happiness.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SECRET MARRIAGE.

THE morning after the shipwreck, the stranger who had been saved by the heroic conduct of Captain Paul awoke with a fearful headache, and pains in all his limbs. Jacqueline found him in the morning too ill to get up.

"He is going to have fever," thought Jacqueline to herself.

Mrs. Horton was perfectly aghast at the idea of the stranger remaining under her roof, but there was no help for it, for before night the woman's prophecy came true, and the stranger was tossing in a raging fever. A doctor was sent for from the nearest town, sixteen miles distant, and Jacqueline installed as nurse.

Who he was, or what was his name, they did not know, so it was impossible to commu-

nicate with his friends, even had Mrs. Horton felt inclined to do so. Weeks passed slowly by, and the stranger hovered between life and death. At last a change took place; youth and a strong constitution triumphed over a fell attack, and he began to mend. As soon as he got well enough to talk, he asked Jacqueline for the lady he had seen the first night of his arrival. Mrs. Horton complied with the sick man's request, and visited him in his room. When the beautiful woman entered, the hollow eyes of the invalid fixed themselves on her.

"What a splendid creature!" he thought. "But that is not the face that has haunted me all through my illness; it was a sweeter and younger one."

And tears of disappointment filled his eyes, for he was very weak. He had hoped, perhaps, that he should see the face he had seen bending over him when he recovered consciousness for a moment, after the shipwreck. "It was an angel of my fancy, after all," he thought.

"I am glad to see you better," said Pauline, "and I hope you will be able soon to leave your room; but I believe you wished to see me?"

"I did, madam, to thank you for your Samaritan conduct, and ask if it be possible to see my noble preserver, and know his name. Not that I can ever forget his courage and the debt I owe him; but that I may see who it is that risked his life to save mine—a perfect stranger."

Pauline became almost tender as she listened to the young man's praises of her brother's daring.

"You cannot see him," she said, "because he's far away; but his name is Noir—Paul Noir—and he is my brother. Now, you must not talk any more, or the doctor will be angry, when he comes."

"One other question, madam, and I will be quiet. When I came to, I have a recollection of many faces around me, and one that has haunted me during all my illness. It was only for a minute I saw it, but it impressed itself on my memory. Was it a living woman or an angel, I saw?"

"How can I tell?" replied Pauline, and there was a hard ring in her voice.

"Ah, forgive me," cried the invalid. "I feel I have offended you; but the face I mean was like you, only very young, almost a child's."

"Perhaps you mean one of my daughters."

"Impossible!" said the sick man. "No, it was too old for that. Have you a younger sister?"

"No."

"Ah! then I have been dreaming," sighed the young man wearily.

Pauline could not help smiling in spite of herself, at his evident disappointment.

"Come, cheer up," she said, "and perhaps you will see the wonderful face, after all. It's Louie he saw," she said, as she left the room; "but I must first know who and what he is, before I let him again see my treasure."

Pauline's last words had a most marvellous effect on the invalid. "It was not a dream, after all; he should see the star that had hovered round his pillow."

He improved so fast, that he was soon enabled to get up and dress. Pauline heard of it, and once more came to see him.

"Ah, I find you are getting on famously."

"Yes, yes, I have taken your advice; but tell me, I pray, when shall I see——"

"Stop, stop, not so fast," replied Pauline; "you must first tell me who you are, before I introduce you to my fold."

"You are quite right, madam," replied the

young man; "forgive me, I had forgotten what was due to one who had preserved my life."

"But," said Pauline, "understand that you are at perfect liberty to leave this house when you are strong enough, without any explanation at all; only, in that case, I shall beg of you to confine yourself to this room, for the present."

"But, madam, I have sent for you to tell you who I am. In the first place, my name is Gustave Lysle, and I am the only son of Mr. Lysle, the London banker, who must be in a dreadful state of suspense, at not hearing from me all this time. I had just returned from Gibraltar, on leave of absence, in that ill-fated vessel which was lost by here; and have to thank Providence and the kind care of you and your brother, that I am a living man, instead of lying at the bottom of the ocean."

"Thank you, Mr. Lysle," replied Pauline. "I am obliged to be particular, for I am the only protector my poor children possess; therefore you will pardon me, I am sure."

"There is no occasion to ask such a thing as forgiveness, madam; you have a perfect right to inquire who and what I am."

"But what nonsense," he thought; "as though I cared to be introduced to her children, indeed!—little things about eleven or twelve at the utmost, for she cannot be more than nine-and-twenty or thirty herself. Oh, if I could but see the beautiful vision of that night!" And the young man gave a prolonged, deep sigh. Pauline heard it, and fearing he was tired, hastened to take his departure.

"Good day, Mr. Lysle," she said; "I must leave you now, but I hope to see you down among us in a day or so."

"Among us," repeated the young man after Pauline had left; "I wonder if there is a sister. But what a madman I am letting my thoughts run on a face I have only seen for a moment, and perhaps not at all save in my dreams. Even should I see that face again, what can it lead to. My father would never consent to his only son and heir marrying an unknown girl. Pshaw! what am I thinking about? Marrying a person I have seen in a dream. Gustave, wake up to life. It's this confounded fever that has made such mad ideas come into your head. When you get out of this ghostly room these sick fancies will disappear."

Gustave Lysle, the rich banker's only son, was a young man of twenty-three, with just the style of good looks to attract very young girls. He was small and slight, with large, melancholy black eyes, delicate features, pale and interesting looking. He was neither better nor worse than most young men of his age, had no particular vices or virtues, held a commission in the army, and had been up to the present time heart-whole. His father was a purse-proud plebeian who had risen in life by lucky speculations, backed by perseverance, to the position of millionaire. He was very proud of his son, and had determined he should marry a lady of rank.

"I don't care about money," he used to say; "Gus shall have enough of that; but BLOOD—we must have BLOOD!"

The banker's name in former days had been Bodgers, but he had changed it by Act of Parliament when he became a rich man and married a poor Scotch baronet's daughter, the mother of Gustave. The boy had always been brought up with the idea he was to make a grand marriage, but he had not thought much about it until now, when he sat in the dismal room of the old Combe House listening to the sea as it dashed on the rocks below.

When Pauline left the sick room there was a perplexed look on her face.

"Shall I throw them together? If he is what he says it would be better if my darling had a protector in case of anything happening to me. And yet will she not be a fit match for anyone when she gets her rights? Lola can take care of herself, but my darling, gentle child, what would become of her should she be deprived of my care? Yes, I will let things take their course, and if they love one another they shall be made happy."

Alas! poor woman, you cannot mould their fate.

That night Pauline sent to London to make enquiries respecting Gustave's father, and in three days an answer came. It was very short—simply "All right."

Upon the evening of its arrival Pauline introduced the invalid to her daughters, and to Katie and Paul. Gustave almost fainted when presented to Louie. It was the face that had haunted his dreams. He could hardly realize his present state of delight. Time flew very swiftly, and when he retired for the night it was not to rest but to think of that lovely girl who had taken his heart completely, for he was over head and ears in

love with her, while poor Lola had lost her heart to him.

More than a week slipped away, and although Gustave was now well enough to return to his home, he still lingered. The lone, dismal house was a paradise to him now, for he loved with the youthful fervour of twenty-three, and was beloved in return.

One very sad heart there was in Combe House, and it was Lola's. She, too, had given her heart from the first to the stranger, but her passion did not make her more sweet and tender. Had it been returned it might have altered her nature, but now her heart was a prey to hatred, envy, and jealousy. She positively hated her twin sister, who had slept almost since her birth in her arms, for the love the stranger had given her. But sweet Louie knew nothing of the wicked feelings that racked Lola's breast, and lacerated the miserable girl's heart with her innocent prattle and praises of the man she loved.

Lovers are never at any time very good company, and Gustave and Louie were worse even than the generality of their kind. They were a veritable Romeo and Juliet. It was not strange that Louie fell in love with Gustave; she had been brought up in such strict

seclusion ever since her childhood that her ideas of men had been gathered from the few she had seen at St. Jacques, or at the village of Combe, and those few were not remarkable for their good looks or prepossessing manners, that really Gustave was the only presentable young man she had ever seen. Gustave's infatuation for the fair girl was still less to be wondered at, for it would have been difficult to have found in the whole length and breadth of England anyone more lovely than this inmate of the old Cornish house. It was not only because her hair was golden, her complexion like the wild rose, and her eyes blue as forget-me-nots. No, it was not these charms that composed Louie's beauty, but the expression of the face, which was so good and gentle, and made her so bewitching. Lola, as far as beauty of feature and colouring went, was quite as pretty, but she lacked the expressive sweetness of her sister's face. This unfortunate girl, who loved the stranger with so fierce a passion, let it get the mastery over her, and each day her heart became more and more estranged from her sister.

"If she were only out of the way," thought Lola, "he would love me, for we are so alike that scarcely any one would know us apart

were it not for this scar, and that I have to thank my mother for."

There was such an evil look in her eyes at that moment that no one would have mistaken the one girl for the other just then.

"I love him more than Louie, with her soft heart and quiet ways, can dream of. If she lost him she would pine for a little time but soon get over it, while I shall always suffer. I cannot forget him. I must win him, if not by fair means by stratagem. Yes, Louie, *you* shall never be his wife."

Lola had been sullen for the last few days, and kept away from the lovers, preserving a moody silence, but they were too much engrossed to notice her absence, and that it was that cut her to the heart—the feeling of being forgotten. Now, however, she joined them in all their rambles, and accompanied them wherever they went.

Mrs. Horton always kept a strict although scarcely perceptible watch over her younger daughter, and this sudden change in Lola's tactics did not escape her observation.

"This amiability on Lola's part bodes no good, I fear, for I am much mistaken if the unhappy girl does not care for Gustave herself; but I will not think that she could be

so bad as to try and win him away from Louie. No, perhaps I am wronging the poor child after all."

Nevertheless Mrs. Horton did not feel comfortable about it. She had studied Lola's character so closely and constantly that she could almost read the inmost working of the girl's heart, and though she tried to persuade herself against the idea, it would force itself into her thoughts and make her miserable, and uncertain how to act with regard to her favourite's future.

As for Louie herself, she was too guileless and happy to dream for a moment of anything but love and truth, and the affection on the part of her twin sister after the little ill-temper she had shown, filled to the brim her cup of happiness.

"Darling," she said, when the two girls were alone in their room for the night after a ramble in which the lovers had been joined by Lola, "I am so happy; Gustave is going to ask mamma's permission to marry me, and then you shall come and stay with me, for you do like Gustave, don't you? Do you know I was so wretched for a time because I feared you did not like him, and I could not bear the idea that you did not care for him

when I love him so dearly. But now, oh, I am so happy, for I have Gustave and you, my sister. What a blessed chance that threw him here, and how noble of Uncle Paul to save him! I shall love him all my life for that. Gustave says, Lola, that the night he was rescued and brought here, you remember" (the miserable girl indeed did remember only too well), "that the first face he saw when he recovered consciousness was mine, and that he fell in love with me at first sight, but he thought during all his illness it was a dream, and that he should never see the face except in fancy. The idea, Lola, of being in love with an imaginary person; would not that be funny? And he says he should know me from you, even without that little scar, which he says he should never have noticed. You must live with us when we are married, and then you can marry a great lord. Gustave knows one who will be sure to fall in love with you, very handsome and very rich."

"I'm much obliged to you and Gustave, I'm sure, for your plans for my future, but I wish all the same you'd let me go to sleep."

"Oh, forgive me, darling! What a little selfish gossip I am, keeping you awake. But

I will be quiet; so good night, my own sister."

Louie's regular breathing soon gave token that she slept; then Lola raised herself on her elbow and regarded the sleeping girl. There was no candle in the room, but the moon shone in and lighted it up as if it had been day.

When Lola found her sister sleeping she got out of bed softly and began dressing herself hastily but noiselessly. Louie turned, and Lola feared that she was going to wake, but no; with a smile on her sweet face she slept again, murmuring the name of the man she loved.

No pity was to be seen in Lola's countenance as she stood gazing at the sleeper, so like and yet so unlike she looked then, her eyes filled with a baneful light, and the whole of her features rendered almost ugly by the fierce passions agitating her breast. She left the room, and was absent about half an hour. A smile of satisfaction passed over her face when on her return she marked how peacefully her sister slept. She undressed as quietly as she had dressed, and got into bed beside her sister. As she laid her head on her pillow

she thought again of the stranger, and muttered,

"Mother, I know a little more of your secrets, and we will see if I do not pay you off in your own coin. So you know I love Gustave, and yet you think no more of my heart breaking than if I were nothing in the world to you as long as your favourite is happy. But I will strike you through her."

The seeming mystery how Lola was so well acquainted with her mother's plans and opinions was in reality no mystery at all. The girl, always prying about, had discovered one of the secret hiding-places in which the old place abounded. It opened by a sliding panel out of the sitting-room into a little recess behind the chimney of her mother's room. There was no doubt a communication between Mrs. Horton's chamber also. No one knew of this place except Lola. She found by listening she could hear all the conversation that went on in her mother's room. Now, Mrs. Horton used sometimes to talk with Jacqueline at night, little thinking there was a listener close at hand; and thus it came about that Lola heard many things that it would have been better for all parties that she should not have known, and though

nothing could palliate her meanness, yet there were excuses to be made for the miserable girl. Had she not grown up in an atmosphere of mystery? Then again, her mother, although just, had never shown her the least love. Besides, had she ever been taught that there is One who sees all we do? No; as I have said before, God was forgotten in the Old Combe House. Was she so much to blame after all? or rather those who had neglected to implant virtue and truth in her heart, were they not responsible in a great measure for her wickedness? There were some good seeds even in her selfish, wayward, passionate nature, but they were choked up with the detestable vice of untruthfulness. She had great abilities, but alas! they were all misdirected.

Daylight set in before sleep visited the busy, plotting brain of Lola, and then not in soft, refreshing slumber, but in fitful, feverish snatches. No wonder she was pale and tired-looking, as she took her seat at the breakfast-table, but no one noticed it except Louie, and she was too sweet, and had too much tact, to make her sister uncomfortable by drawing attention to her pale face.

Breakfast was nearly over when Gustave,

with a sad countenance, announced that he had found the evening before letters at the post-office which would compel him to leave shortly.

It was Louie now who turned white as a lily. Her life since she had known Gustave had been such a delicious dream, that she had forgotten to think that there must come an awakening when he left, so the news came upon her with double force. She was going to lose him. Oh, what would life be without him after the glimpse of paradise she had caught? Life at the old house when he had gone would be like darkness after light. But then he loved her; he would come back; so hope followed fast on the heels of despair.

Lola felt his coming departure more severely than her sister. "He was leaving, but not with his heart full of love for her. She could have borne the parting then," she said to herself; "yet perhaps it was better he should go if he were not for her. Yes, better leave, than stay and torture her by showing his love for her sister. Was she going to lose him though?" she asked herself. At any rate she would make a bold stroke for the prize. What mattered her sister's broken heart—that sister who loved her so dearly? Nothing,

when compared to the wild, fierce, unholy passion she felt for this man. Better ten thousand times he had been lying at the bottom of the sea than been saved to bring the misery he was doomed to bring both on himself and others, through no fault of his own. Often in the days to come he cursed the fate that had snatched him from the ocean.

Gustave's approaching departure cast a gloom over the whole of the party. Mrs. Horton, as she noticed Louie's emotion, began to question if she had acted wisely in introducing this stranger to her cherished child. Then again, little as she loved Lola, she could not be insensible to the look of suffering on her face.

"I fear I have been to blame," she thought, and she spoke more gently than usual to Lola. "Will you not come with me, dear?" she said, laying her hand on the girl's shoulder; but Lola shrank from the touch. "She wants me to go with her that Gustave and Louie may be alone. I know her." But she did her mother injustice. Mrs. Horton pitied her deeply, for she saw how hopelessly her younger daughter loved.

When Gustave and Louie were left alone

there were the usual vows of eternal love and fidelity exchanged between them, but Gustave was trying to persuade Louie to consent to a secret marriage.

"I cannot bear to leave you, my darling. Oh, do pray be my wife, and then I shall be secured of my rosebud."

"But mamma would never consent to that, Gustave," said the girl, "and I cannot act against her wishes, darling, after all her goodness. No, Gustave, I will be true to you just the same as if I were your wife, for ever and ever, only do not ask me that. You love me, and I have faith that we shall be very happy if we only do what is right. Oh, my own! do you think it is nothing to me, this parting? Why, it is like tearing my life away. A month ago I was a happy, thoughtless child, now I am a woman. But I would not go back, Gustave, though my future were to be dark and lonely. I would not give up the joy I have experienced in your love to be a queen, my darling."

"And yet," murmured the young man, "you will not give me the proof I ask. You will not be my wife."

"No, Gustave, it would be wrong and dishonest. You would go back into the world

as a single man when you were married, and you would be acting a lie every day of your life. Forgive me for speaking so plainly, but it is because I love you so that I should not like even a shadow of meanness to rest on you. Besides which you would like to have your wife *sans reproche*, and if I for your sake consented to this secret marriage, would not the gossips be busy with both your name and mine?"

Gustave was not prepared for this reasoning; he was not a bad young man, and love had purified him, in a measure; nevertheless, he could not understand such exalted ideas.

"Louie," he said, "I had no idea you were such a woman of the world; you are quite right—I beg your pardon for making such a proposal; but I thought your love for me was as great as mine is for you. I see that, like the rest of your sex, you are not able to give up the pomp and show of a marriage with bridesmaids, orange blossoms, etc., for a simple ceremony, although it be for the happiness of the man you profess to love."

"Gustave, you are cruel and unjust," cried Louie. "It is not for the pomp and show I refuse, and you know it; what are bridesmaids and orange blossoms to me? I have

never been brought up like other girls; I know little of the conventionalities of the world, therefore it is not on that account, but simply because, darling, it would be wrong—yes, and mean and deceitful! Why not tell your father?—you are his only child, and when he knows it is for your happiness, he will not be hard-hearted; but if he finds out you have deceived him, he will never forgive you."

"Now, Louie, you are talking like a child; you do not know my father. If I go away a free man, he will make me marry some one else."

That was an unlucky speech of Gustave's; he thought to frighten the gentle girl into compliance with his wishes by the threat of losing him; but he did not know Louie.

"Gustave," she said, and her tone was sad and reproachful, "do you think he would not consent to your marrying me? for, if so, better far you said good-bye at once. Oh! my life—my love! if your heart cannot remain true and steadfast to me without this wrong-doing, I would rather die by inches than hold you by such means. But you do not mean it? Say, darling, say—say you do not!"

"Yes, I do," said the young man, sullenly.

"What proof have I that you love me as you say, when you persistently refuse to make me happy? I shall leave, and you will forget me —or worse, see some one you like better."

"Gustave! Gustave!" almost screamed the girl, "you do not know how cruelly your words pierce my heart! Love some one else! You are my life—my all! and yet you say it is not for my sake, but for yours. No, my darling, your honour is dearer to me than life; it shall never be stained by me: people shall never have occasion to speak lightly of your wife. But, Gustave, unsay those cruel words you have just spoken!" and Louie caressingly stroked his hand.

"Well, I did not mean all; but I would rather be alone for a few moments. I have been a bear, Louie, and you are an angel—forgive me!" and he took her in his arms, and printed a kiss on her white forehead.

The girl left the room, and went to her own, to pray for sttrength to resist temptation. Katie had taught the gentle girl to go to her Father in Heaven.

When Gustave was alone, he raged and fumed, but could not help acknowledging that Louie was right. "She is too good," he said aloud, "and I am a brute."

"Why are you a brute, Mr. Lysle?" asked the soft voice of Lola, who stood at his elbow, for she had entered unperceived, and overheard his words.

He turned to her, a little vexed.

"Oh! nothing, Miss Lola—I did not know you were there."

"I did not mean to intrude, and will withdraw if my presence be disagreeable to you," replied Lola, and she made a feint to go.

"No, stay! I am so miserable!" and he sank down in a chair, covering his face with his hands. She watched him for a few moments in silence, until he had regained his composure. "What a fool you must think me!" he said; "but I cannot bear to leave Louie."

"It will not be for long?" asked Lola in a tender, compassionate voice, although her heart was almost bursting with the sight of his love for her sister.

"Oh! I cannot tell. Ah! you will be my friend, will you not, Lola? Forgive me calling you so, but you are my sister, you know," (the girl winced at that). "Advise me, comfort me, tell me what to do," and he poured forth his woes into the ears of the treacherous girl.

"And she refused to consent to a secret marriage?" There was just a shade of eagerness in Lola's tone, as she continued—"It was right; but do you really wish it, and think that all is fair, as you say, in love or war?"

"Yes, yes, I do—I do!" cried the impetuous youth. "Besides, who need know anything about the secret marriage but ourselves? and we could have a public one when I came to claim her. It is only because, then, I should be doubly sure of my jewel."

"Well, as you have given me your confidence, you may rely on my assisting you, and endeavouring to promote your happiness, by trying to persuade Louie to do what you ask. So cheer up, and wait here till I come back."

"So she refuses to marry him in secret, a little fool!" said Lola, as she left the room to go to her sister. "She deserves to lose him. Love, indeed!—she does not know what it means."

She found Louie pale and exhausted with crying, but she comforted her, and to Gustave's idea praised her sister and strengthened her in her refusal. She returned to Gustave, bidding him hope, and that all would be well, but on no account to mention

one word to her sister again on the subject, as it would undo all she had tried to do, but to get a licence and make all the arrangements necessary for a secret marriage.

Gustave, overjoyed at her apparent success, did as he was bid, and placed himself entirely in the false girl's hands, carefully avoiding the forbidden topic when in Louie's company. His manner to Louie became so fond and affectionate after his interview with Lola, that her poor little heart rejoiced once more, for she had been very sad after the reproaches he had heaped upon her. At last the evening for his departure arrived. He took a loving farewell of Louie before Mrs. Horton, as Lola had arranged, and then hurried away to a small church in a village some few miles distant on the coast, where he was to meet his bride. Soon after he had left, a muffled shadowy figure stole forth into the darkness, and hastened to the same spot. The marriage took place, but the sobbing, frightened, veiled bride was not the sweet Louie. The wretched man had married Lola.

CHAPTER XV.

PAULINE'S TRIUMPH.

SIX months gone. What changes are effected in that short time; yet life at Weston Park rolled smoothly on as though care and trouble were banished from the world. Everything wore its best summer garment when we last saw it; now winter, cold winter, has come with his mantle of white and his icy wind to freeze the life-blood and chill the heart. There is a sleet falling that stings the face as it is driven against it by every gust of wind and blinds the eyes.

Lady Weston was sitting at the window of her little morning room.

"Who can this be?" she said, as an old-fashioned fly was cautiously and slowly driven over the heavy roads; "who can be coming to pay a visit on such a day as this, I wonder?"

As the vehicle and its contents drew up at the hall door, she rang the bell and enquired of the man-servant who it was.

"Mr. Matcham, for Sir Herbert, my lady," was the reply.

"Mr. Matcham!" repeated Isobel; "what can have brought him down on such a day as this? but Herbert will tell me I suppose bye-and-bye."

The long afternoon passed, and the dinner hour drew near.

"What can be the matter?" thought Isobel, beginning to get anxious. "Herbert never misses coming to me after luncheon, and here he has had it to-day in the library, shut up with Mr. Matcham. But I suppose it's some little business matter or other, and Mr. Matcham, I know, is very slow and methodical, and would be a long time discussing anything with Herbert, and I shall laugh at my stupid nervousness. It is time to dress for dinner." So she put herself into the hands of her maid.

Never had the girl seen her mistress so preoccupied, until she said, "Sir Herbert will have a wet ride, won't he, my lady?" for she wondered what made her master gallop off just before dinner, as she had seen him do, in

such bad weather, and put this question out of curiosity.

"A wet ride! what do you mean?" said Isobel, her eyes opened to their utmost extent.

"Why, did you not see Sir Herbert ride away like mad just as you came up to dress for dinner?"

"No, Jane."

"Oh but he did, your ladyship, and he looked so white and wild like," said the stupid gossip, not noticing in her anxiety to tell the startling news that her mistress was getting paler and paler. It was only by a strong effort Lady Weston kept from fainting.

"Quick, quick, Jane! give me my dress;" and in an almost incredible time she entered the drawing-room, pale and trembling, with some unknown dread.

Mr. Matcham was awaiting her there. But why does he look so kind and pitying?

"Where is Sir Herbert?" she asked.

"Gone out for a ride, madam," replied the old man.

Before we proceed further, it would perhaps be better to explain that Mr. Matcham was the family solicitor, a kind-hearted, upright, just man, about sixty years of age, who

was always treated both by Sir Herbert and his wife as an old and valued friend.

"Gone out, Mr. Matcham," said Isobel, "and without a word to me? Oh, you have brought him some ill news! But why does he not let me share his vexation, whatever it is? He spoils me, you see, by wishing to spare me any annoyance; but it is wrong of him not to tell me," she said with an attempt at cheerfulness.

"How can I tell her the fatal truth?" groaned the old man. "Yes, dear madam, I have been the bearer of dreadful tidings to Sir Herbert, and believe me, I would rather have given a year of my life than have to say that which I am compelled to tell you to-day."

"Oh, tell me quickly! do not keep me in suspense."

"But first I was nearly forgetting in my nervousness that here is a letter Sir Herbert left for you."

"A letter! give it to me;" and Isobel read with a face paling even to the lips the following:—

"My life! my adored! my heart is breaking as I write. I have done you a wrong so great, that I am almost dead with grief. But indeed Isobel it was done in ignorance. You

know I told you all about——oh, my God! I cannot write it. Ask Matcham; and, my darling, try not to curse your unfortunate, wretched Herbert."

"What does he mean?" she gasped, handing the paper to Mr. Matcham.

"It means," he replied, "that Sir Herbert's first wife is not dead."

With a groan that seemed to rend her heart, Isobel fell down insensible.

The old man lifted up the fragile form and placed it on a couch, and taking some water from the side-board, proceeded to bathe her hands and face. She soon recovered consciousness, but there was a wild light in her eyes that made the kind-hearted lawyer's heart ache.

"If she would only cry," he thought, "she would be better; but I cannot bear this."

"Not dead!" said Isobel in a dreamy voice; "not dead! then who am I? Oh, my God!" she screamed, as the dreadful truth dawned on her with all its force, "Willy! oh, Willy! he will curse his unfortunate mother!"

"Hush! hush! Lady Weston. Do not give way to such grief."

"Lady Weston! I have no right to that name. Herbert! Herbert! why are you not

here to comfort me? yet he is not my husband. Oh, what shall I do? what shall I do?"

"This is dreadful!" exclaimed Mr. Matcham. "What is to be done? My dear lady, I pray you, I implore you, calm yourself, for the sake of your child—for the sake of Sir Herbert, who is suffering even more than you."

"Oh!" moaned poor Isobel, "we were so happy; if death had only taken me before that awful blow. Muriel was right. But are you certain that the woman lives? May it not be some impostor?"

"Alas! I fear not."

"Tell me all. You see I am calm enough now. Nothing can touch me more."

Mr. Matcham was at his wits' end, but he thought perhaps it was better to let her know the whole history.

"You know, Lady Weston, that Sir Herbert was married before."

Isobel nodded her head in token of assent.

"But you were unacquainted with the sad story."

"Yes, I saw it was a painful subject, so never alluded to it," replied the mournful voice of Isobel.

"Nineteen years ago, when Sir Herbert was at college—he was only plain Mister then, for his father was alive—there lived in the town of Oxford a teacher of languages. He was at this time a middle-aged man, respected both for his integrity and misfortunes. He had three children. The eldest, a plain young woman about seven or eight and twenty, kept house for him. She was by his first wife, the daughter of a tradesman in the town; but his son, aged twenty, and other daughter of seventeen, were the children of his second and most unfortunate union. He had been a handsome man, and quite young at the time of his first wife's death, and his capacity of teacher had fascinated a young French lady at one of the schools where he taught. The end of it was that he married her. It proved a most miserable affair. Her parents and friends disavowed her, and her passion for the handsome master soon died out, so when her second child was about two years old, she left him for the protection of some gentleman, and sank into the lowest depths of degradation and died. The man struggled on as best he could with his broken heart, for he dearly loved the wife who had disgraced his honest name, and

his eldest daughter took the place of mother to the two children now left more than motherless. They both grew up with remarkable personal beauty, the girl especially. At the age of seventeen she was one of the most lovely creatures it was possible to see, but she had inherited her mother's failings with her beauty, and the silly adoration her father and sister lavished upon her fostered her van ty more and more.

"About this time ill-luck threw Herbert Weston in her way. He was dazzled by her, and she led him on, young as she was. There were strange tales told of her among the collegians, but they did not reach Sir Herbert's ears, and one fatal day he proposed a secret marriage. She jumped at the offer, and they were married.

"When Roland Weston, two years his brother's junior, but ten years his senior in his knowledge of life, (as being initiated in all the vices of the world is called), was introduced to his new sister, he turned pale, and the lady's face wore a triumphant expression very singular in a bride when her husband's brother was presented to her. Report said that they were not strangers, and that it was to punish Roland she had married his brother.

However, Herbert soon found his wife did not care for him in the least, added to which her temper was anything but amiable. Quarrels soon commenced, and they had not been married six months before he most heartily repented the step he had taken.

"A year after the marriage twin daughters were born, but instead of softening their mother's heart she became if possible more difficult to deal with. She was moreover very jealous, and in a fit of passion threw a knife at her husband, which, instead of hitting him, struck one of the twins who were at play. The blow was feared to be fatal; however, the child recovered, though of course she would be disfigured for life. After this had occurred contentions increased and got worse and worse, and Sir Herbert, who had never acknowledged his marriage, parted from his wife.

"It was at this time that he first saw you. His wife seeing his hatred of herself and how fearfully his chain galled him, laid a most devilish plan to be revenged on both you and him, for she had found out Sir Herbert's great affection for you. She left England, and had a report spread that she and her two children were drowned. Sir Herbert made all neces-

sary enquiries, and found, as he thought, the statement correct, for who would have dreamt of such cold-blooded vengeance. After the year of mourning he married you. The woman knew this from the announcement in the papers, and has been waiting all these years to make the blow more crushing."

"And this woman really lives?" asked Lady Weston in a piteous tone.

"Alas! yes, there is no doubt about it. I have seen her and recognised her against my will."

"Then God help us, and my poor Herbert most of all! But what is she going to do?"

"She is coming here, and it was because I would not let her have the fiendish pleasure she contemplates in seeing you turned out of your home that I came on at once. My advice is for you to leave directly, dear Lady Weston, before she comes, for she may arrive at any moment."

"Yes, you are right, and I thank you very, very much for your kind thoughtfulness," said poor Isobel, holding out her little hand to the old man.

"God bless and protect you," he said, taking her hand tenderly, "and never forget that you and Wilfred have a faithful friend

in me. But where does your ladyship propose going?"

"I shall go to my sister Muriel. Thank God that in this hour of trial I have her to lean upon. When did you say that——" poor Isobel could not bring on herself to mention the name of her rival—"will be here?"

"I do not know for certain, but I should not be surprised if she came to-night."

"Then I will go and pack my things at once," said the heart-broken woman.

In less than an hour, Isobel accompanied by Wilfred descended into the drawing-room equipped for her journey. The travelling carriage was at the door and all her luggage on it when she came to say good-bye to Mr. Matcham.

The servants did not know what was the matter, but they guessed something was wrong, and pressed round their beloved mistress as she passed through the hall, crying bitterly. As the carriage rolled through the park gates another entered, and it was thus the rivals met for the first time. A smile of triumph lit up the brilliant features of Pauline. Isobel's face wore a sad look, pitying and forgiving.

"She is very beautiful," she thought; "how could she be so cruel?" Yet Sir Herbert's cherished wife had not one revengeful thought against the woman who had driven her forth an outcast.

Pauline, on the other hand, did not find the first taste of the revenge she had panted for so agreeable as she thought. When she and her daughters arrived at the Hall they were received in silence. Mr. Matcham had told the servants the sad story, and all their sympathies were enlisted with their idolized mistress, and they looked on the woman as a usurper.

"So Sir Herbert's mistress has left, I find," said Pauline, or, as we must for the present call her, Lady Weston, addressing Mr. Matcham. "I am very glad she has sufficient delicacy, because it would have been an awkward meeting for me."

"Sir Herbert's wife has left for the present to go to her sister's house, but I do not know what you mean by his mistress," replied Mr. Matcham, indignantly.

"Wife! what nonsense! *I* am his wife, you know, and as we are in England, a man can only have one at a time. But where is this affectionate husband of mine, that he does

not come to welcome his wife and children home at last?"

This was more than Mr. Matcham could bear.

"Madam," he exclaimed, "think of the suffering you have already inflicted, and leave the unfortunate man, whom you have robbed of all he held most dear in this world, in peace; if, indeed, he can ever feel that again."

"Polite to me, I must confess; I suppose lawyers have no time for courtesy to ladies. However, I will overlook that. Of course you are angry that your side has lost the game, and very natural too; but you see I can afford to be generous, being victorious, therefore to show you I bear no malice, will you stay to dinner, and see my daughters?"

"No, madam, my fly is ordered, and I shall dine at the 'Weston Arms' in the village."

"As you like," said the woman, carelessly, although she was anything but content in her heart at the signs everywhere displayed of her rival's popularity.

"Mamma," said Louisa, as the trio sat at dinner, "is not this a dream?—Is it really true that this house, with all these grand servants, belongs to us?"

"Yes, my darling," replied her mother, "and they will be all yours some day."

Lola smiled at this. "Ah," she thought, "I have secured the prize in the lottery," but she said nothing.

"Then who was that pretty, sad-looking lady with the little boy, who went out as we came in, with all that luggage?"

"That, my dear girl, was a person who, for a time, usurped my place, but now she has fallen from her estate."

"Poor woman, she looked so sad, I feel for her deeply;" and Louie sighed.

There had been a pitiful look on her face of late which caused her mother much uneasiness. The truth was, the girl was pining for news from the man she loved, little knowing the dreadful gulf that separated her for ever from him she cherished so fondly.

Pauline, too, had been puzzled at his silence. "Now," she thought, "he will come and claim her; she is no longer the obscure child of a mysterious widow, but the daughter and heiress of Sir Herbert Weston, and I will give her to him because she loves him, not that he deserves her, for he certainly does not, neglecting her as he has done; however, it

will be best to let bygones be bygones in this case for the sake of Louie's happiness."

The three had nearly finished dinner when Sir Herbert came into the room. He started as if he had been shot at the sight of the woman who had caused him such overwhelming misery. He had not heard of their arrival, having entered the house unperceived by the servants, who would otherwise have told him; and although he knew the fatal day must come, yet he was hardly prepared for it so soon.

"Ah, Sir Herbert," said Pauline, advancing to meet him, "this is no doubt a surprise; you did not expect to see us after so long a separation, and your daughters are almost strangers to you: ten years, is it not, since you saw them? Louie and Lola, come and embrace your father." The wretched man groaned as the soft mocking voice fell on his ear. "You must not mind, children; your poor papa is so overcome at this happy reunion, perhaps you had better leave us alone for the present."

The girls did as their mother bid them, but Louie, before leaving the room, went up to Sir Herbert, who had sunk on to a sofa the very picture of despair, and kissed him.

"Poor father!" was all she said. But the miserable man raised his eyes to the pure angel face and noticed its goodness, and an impulse he could not resist made him take her in his arms.

"God bless you!" he said, in a choked voice. "Go now, my child." Of Lola he took no notice.

When the door had closed on the twins, Pauline addressed Sir Herbert:

"At last we have met. Do you remember I told you I would be revenged? Have I kept my word? You would not acknowledge our marriage ten years ago, but you *must* now; and my rival, the woman for whose sake you would have died, what is she?—The proud Isobel Lawson."

At the mention of his injured wife's name Sir Herbert started to his feet.

"Hold, base wretch! how dare you utter that name? What *had* I done that you should bring this sorrow and disgrace on me and mine? What do you imagine to gain by this villainy? You have driven Isobel from her house, and you think to take her place. The law is on your side, yet listen to me: your crime will bring you no happiness; you have had your revenge; but without

seeking it, something tells me that I and my injured wife will have ours. Yes, wife; for Isobel is my true wife in the eyes of God. Aye, you may sneer, but you will have to acknowledge His power yet."

"Really you have become quite a religious character under the tuition of the person who has just left. You had better go after her, perhaps, as you say she is 'your true wife in the eyes of God.' I have no doubt she can dispense with the countenance of the world; and perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me, as you have turned prophet, in what way my punishment is to come?"

"Sneer and laugh, devil that you are," said Sir Herbert, crimson with rage, and stung to the quick at this woman's contemptuous mention of his pure wife's name. "I leave you in possession of what you have schemed for, but it will not be for long. One thing, before I go from your hateful presence, I feel certain we shall meet again when our positions will be reversed." And before Pauline could answer, he was gone.

"I have won," she said. "The day for which I have lived has come at last. Now I will take my place in the world, and shine, as I was meant to shine; I am far more beau-

tiful than I was ten years ago; yes, I shall make a figure in society yet." The expression on her beautiful features was not one of such unalloyed satisfaction as the words would seem to warrant. It was true, the day she had longed for had come at last, and most complete revenge was taken on Sir Herbert and his wife; on Sir Herbert (who would not acknowledge her) in separating him from the woman he loved so well, and disgracing her name, and on her rival in hurling her from her position, and making her and her son outcasts from society. This was undoubtedly satisfactory, and her success was perfect, as far as it went, but somehow or other she did not feel so elated as she imagined she would have done. Sir Herbert's love and respect for Isobel, and the horror and disgust he evinced for her, annoyed her; then his prophecies, though of course ridiculous, were unpleasant; so, taking it altogether, the triumph was not so sweet, after all. The fruit she had imagined so luscious when it hung in the distance, had, at the first taste, rather a bitter, gritty flavour. What if it turn out to be ashes?

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ROSEMERE NOSE.

GUSTAVE LYSLE was sitting sipping his coffee in an apartment in his father's house in Park Lane. All that wealth could buy was in the room; perfect gems of pictures adorned the walls, costly Sèvres, and Etruscan vases, and rare statuettes were placed about with a lavish hand, and the service of jewelled china on the table was worth a small fortune. Gustave's face wore a bored and listless appearance.

"No letter to-day," he said in a disappointed tone of voice, turning over the small heap that were on the table, in search of one that was not among them; "heigho! when is this miserable life to end? Ah, Louie, my darling," he said, apostrophising, after the insane manner of lovers, a small ugly likeness the girl had given him of herself, "I must

give up all this and come to you; I am sure we could live very happily in a cottage; but then, by Jove! shall we have enough for the cottage, even?" Now Mr. Gustave's idea of a cot was rather magnificent; it meant a lovely villa in the neighbourhood of Twickenham or Richmond, exquisitely furnished, with charming pleasure-grounds, costly flowers, good stables, thorough-bred horses, a dashing phaeton; in fact, everything in the most charming fashion.

"Dear! what a thing it is, this money!" he sighed, as he took up the morning paper. Just at that moment a paragraph caught his eye, headed, "Romantic Episode in High Life, or Truth is stranger than Fiction."

"Our readers will be astonished to hear that one of the most startling of events has just occurred, and will no doubt give the upper ten thousand something to talk about for some time to come. Sir Herbert Weston, well known in fashionable circles, will be remembered as carrying off the beauty of the season, some years ago—Miss Isobel Lawson. According to report, they enjoyed the very ideal of domestic felicity, and a son was born, to enhance their happiness; when, all at once, a

lady, claiming to be Sir Herbert's wife, springs up, from no one knows where, with two daughters. On enquiry it turns out to be all true. Now comes the romantic part: Sir Herbert, when a young man, had become enamoured of a very lovely girl, and married her, but it had been a secret marriage, as the lady was in a much lower position in the social scale than her husband. The marriage did not turn out happily, as those sort of matches seldom do; perhaps had the lady borne a son to Sir Herbert he might have acknowledged his wife, for the sake of his heir, but she only presented him with twin daughters. The wife, enraged at Sir Herbert's injustice, as she thought, left England, accompanied by her children, and, it was believed, met with her death, as the ill-fated ship they were supposed to have sailed in, was lost, with all on board. After the sad affair there was no need for Sir Herbert to make his unfortunate marriage public, as his wife and children were buried in the sea; so, when a year had elapsed, he proposed to Miss Lawson and was accepted. Now, after ten years' uninterrupted happiness, the first wife turns out not to have been drowned at all; she did not go in the vessel that was lost; but happening to hear after-

wards that she was supposed to be dead, remained silent, to see what her husband would do, and now comes forward to turn her rival out of the position she has enjoyed all these years. Sir Herbert, we believe, has left England a broken-hearted man. Lady Weston, or as we must now call her, Miss Lawson, has returned with her son to her friends, and the real Lady Weston has taken up her residence with her two daughters at Weston Park. Society will be on the *qui vive* for the appearance of the Miss Westons, as report says that both they and their mother are extremely beautiful—in the blonde style, so much admired this season. We have no doubt that we shall soon be hearing more of them, if only half the marvellous stories told of their beauty and accomplishments are true, and Weston Park will be as gay, if not as select, under the new regime. '*Le Roi est mort, vive le Roi.*'"

"What can this mean? a lady and her twin daughters! can it be Louie and Lola—it seems like them—twins and blondes; but pshaw! there are other fair women in the world besides my darling and her mother and sister; but I will run down to Cornwall if I

do not have a letter to-morrow, because Louie may be ill, or a thousand things may have occurred in my absence, and I have never been so long without a letter before."

Breakfast finished, he put on his hat and strolled forth to his club. It was a bright, frosty morning, and everything looked brisk and lively; pedestrians were walking quickly in their endeavours to keep themselves warm, boys, as usual, were up to mischief, making slides in every available place, in defiance of policemen, and to the imminent danger of elderly gentlemen. The sun had made up his mind to come out and show his face, and the hoar frost on the trees in the park glistened like so many diamonds in his rays. But Gustave did not notice any of these things, as he walked to his club, something more absorbing occupied his thoughts—love; love, that rules the court, the camp, the grove, was the subject that engrossed him. He had taken the fever of first love very badly, and absence, instead of lessening his malady, only increased it; he had been absent from the object of his passion three months, but the image of his wife, as he thought Louie to be, was brighter than ever. Alas! poor fellow, little did he think what a fearful awakening he was to

have, from his dream of love. As he entered his club, he was greeted warmly by two or three gentlemen who were there, for Gustave was a favourite with most people.

"I say, Lysle, have you heard this odd affair about Weston in this morning's paper? but you don't know him—he was before your time; what a jolly fellow he was, so genial and warm-hearted. What a blow it must be for him, though I pity his wife the most."

"Which?" asked a young guardsman, languidly.

"Which? why, Miss Lawson that was—she was a beauty, I can tell you; none of your wax dolls, with yellow hair and china blue eyes, but a woman with a soul in her face. I remember when she first came out she created quite a furore, although there were many pretty girls that year; but she held her place for several seasons, and refused a number of suitors, and at last, when everybody thought she had made up her mind to a life of single blessedness, she married Sir Herbert Weston. It was not thought much of a match for her, notwithstanding he was rich, for she could have married a duke. Being evidently a love-match, they retired into domestic life, and the world of fashion knew them no more; now for

this dreadful blow to come! Oh, it is too hard on her! well, well, we never know what is in store for any of us. By the way, all you fellows know 'La Belle Curtise,' that's her sister."

"Is she?" said the young guardsman, "then if Miss Lawson is anything like her she would not be to my taste; I can't bear those dark, swarthy, gipsy women."

"Oh, oh, hear Ernsley, he has been roasted by 'La Belle,' I suppose; never mind, she can dispense with your admiration, my dear boy, and we all know the style you affect."

There was a general laugh at this. Ernsley was a very young man, with more money than wit, who had lost his heart to a married lady well known in fashionable circles, and of the dolly style of beauty that had just been run down.

"Who is this new wife who has just turned up?" asked Gustave.

"Oh, some beautiful nobody he fell in love with while at college, but she is a fact, and her daughters will take the estates, for they are not entailed, I understand; it's a d——d shame, such a splendid little chap as Weston's boy is too, to be made illegitimate. Now there 'll be another heiress in the market, and a chance

for somebody; it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good, they say, so I suppose some fellow will profit by the change if the boy goes to the wall."

"But where did the wife come from?"

"Now, Lysle, you want to know too much—that is a piece of information I am not acquainted with myself. But cheer up, old fellow, your inquiring mind will, I have no doubt, be enlightened on that subject in a few days, for of course there will be more particulars of the wonderful story; but what makes you so anxious—do you intend going in for the heiress? By Jove! it will be a bore, because there are two girls, twins; now, if they are alike, it would be deuced annoying for a fellow to go in for the heiress, and then marry the sister by mistake."

Just at this moment the footman entered, with a letter for Gustave. "I beg pardon, sir, but this came in the morning, and was put in the wrong pigeon-hole."

Gustave took it eagerly, for it was in the handwriting of Louie, as he thought; he glanced at the top of the letter, and gave a cry of joy.

"What's the matter?" asked several voices.

"Matter! why—why—that I am the happiest fellow alive."

"Well, tell us what it is."

"Not now, another time—excuse me," and Gustave left hurriedly.

"Well, of all the odd things, I think that's the oddest," said the gentleman who had related the history of Isobel's marriage. "That young man is in love, and he has got the complaint awfully bad. I foresee matrimony looming in the distance for him: these youngsters will never take warning by the awful examples set them, they must run their heads into the noose, and gain experience for themselves; after that sage remark I think I'll take a brandy and soda."

Gustave was in a state of the greatest excitement, when he left the club. His darling turned out to be an heiress, and his equal, nay, his superior in rank, and she was his wife; how he hugged himself, figuratively speaking, for his firmness in insisting on that secret marriage. "Dear Louie, how I long to take her in my arms! Why, I have never seen her dear little face since she has been my wife, and her voice was so choked and nervous all through the ceremony, that it scarcely sounded like hers. That was an odd whim making me

leave, without a word after the marriage, even not letting me say good-bye to Lola, and only consenting to be my wife at the last moment, and then sending me the news through Lola. What a brick that girl is! well, I shall not forget her. Now I must tell the governor, and run down to claim my pet, at once. I think I can go to-night: yes, I will, by Jove. Won't the pater be awfully pleased? he'll go on such high stilts he'll never come down any more; and then Louie is so lovely, what a sensation she will create, and sha'n't I just be envied getting the prize in the lottery. But what a sell for the second wife of Sir Herbert! and there is a boy too they say; it's no business of mine though: I daresay Louie's mother was not well treated, and she is a splendid woman, and a perfect lady; she might be an empress by her manners, and above all she is Louie's mother."

Gustave had taken a hansom to his father's bank, for he knew he should find him there, at that time of the day. He was such a rare visitor that the clerks opened their eyes in astonishment when he entered. "Whatever is up?" they whispered among themselves as the young man disappeared into his father's sanctum.

"Hulloa, Gus, my boy, what brings you here?" asked the banker as his son entered, "take a chair and I'll attend to you in a moment."

Gustave did as he was desired, and waited until Mr. Lysle had signed some papers, and the clerk who was with him when Gustave came in had withdrawn.

"Now, Gus, what's your business, my boy?" said his father, "but first it's time for a biscuit and a glass of madeira; open that cabinet and get out the wine and glasses."

The millionaire banker, (a widower), was a red-faced, pompous looking man, with a shining, bald, round head, and a fringe of wiry iron grey hair ornamenting it. He had heavy overhanging eyebrows, and deep-set, small, black eyes; his nose had no particular character, but his mouth was large and decisive, drawn down at the corners, and his upper lip was extremely long; he wore no beard or moustache, but a pair of stiff, bristly whiskers, which gave him something of the appearance of a fierce tom cat; he was short in stature, and what would have been called in anybody else, except the rich banker, podgy. His hands were fat and coarse, and he was purse-proud and plebeian in manner. It was very

difficult to fancy that he and Gustave were father and son, yet there were some points of resemblance if you looked very closely. Gustave was small in stature, but then he was very slender and had small hands and feet; his eyes were black, but instead of being small and sparkling, they were large and melancholy, and his upper lip, which was long, like his father's, was covered by a beautiful, silky, black moustache.

"Now, Gus," said the banker, when he had poured himself out a glass of the old madeira, and passed the decanter to his son. "What is your business?"

Gustave, thus encouraged, told the story, even to the secret marriage, but that piece of news he kept to the last, for he knew his respected parent would blame any imprudence like that, and he wished to put all the advantages before him at the first.

"Upon my word, my boy, but this is good news, not but what I should have preferred more blood and less money, yet still it's a good match, and I congratulate you. You sly dog! this, then, is the reason you fought so shy of Lady Diana Rosemere."

Gustave made a grim face at the name. The lady in question was a spinster of some

thirty-nine summers, with a long pedigree, and a figure so long and ethereal that it impressed the belief that the ancient race represented in Lady Diana had run to seed. Her nose was extremely aquiline and developed; it was a pride, this same feature, in the Rosemere family, but Lady Diana seemed to have reached the acme of perfection as far as this went, and outdone any of her long line of ancestors in that respect. It was true, at times, that the blue blood would colour the tip of this very aristocratic feature, showing in strong, not to say startling contrast with the lilies on her cheeks, but then she was an earl's daughter, and so high bred—at least, so the banker thought—though her rivals called her ladyship an ugly, impertinent old maid; (these of course were only pretty little chits of girls, who could not boast of Norman robbers for ancestors.) Now this same damsel had nothing but her long pedigree and Rosemere nose for a dowry, and although she had been out some twenty seasons, there had never yet been found anyone sufficiently presuming to aspire to the lady's hand. So she remained, like a single rose, on the parent stem. She used to disguise with the aid of pearl powder, et cetera, the ravages impolite

old Time, who is no respecter of persons, had made, for he had the presumption to lay his vulgar old hand on her; besides which, the wear of twenty years' hard unsuccessful campaigning, carried on with a perseverance worthy of her noble race, left its traces on her face.

"It was so long ago since she came out," saucy girls in their teens would say, "that it was time she went in again."

The banker, who was always looking out for blood as the first qualification in the lady who was to be his son's wife, had selected Lady Diana. There was some trifling difference of seventeen or eighteen years in their ages, but what she lacked in youth she made up in blood. True, her figure reminded one of a mop-stick, but then it was so aristocratic. Gustave, however, had not taken kindly to any of these advantages, and had even been heard to say that he could dispense with such attractions in the lady he made his wife. Under these circumstances Mr. Lysle made the best of his son's choice, did the British father to perfection, and gave him his blessing, although the Rosemere nose would intrude itself on his thoughts, and he could not help sighing at the chance he had lost of calling his son's wife

Lady Lysle. "Lady Diana Lysle! how grand it sounded." But it was no good sighing, it was all over now that dream, and he must thank the gods for the daughter-in-law they had given him. Then a bright thought flashed across his mind, why need he lose the blood out of the family?—why not marry her himself? though he kept his ideas on the subject from his son.

"So you mean to go down to Weston Park to-night, Gus? Well, I think you are right, it's best to lose no time. What a lucky thing you chose the elder of the girls. Here, you'd better get some kickshaw in the shape of a bracelet, or some such trifle, that women like, but let it be solid; always get your money's worth, boy, and things that will fetch their market value if you should ever want to part with them. There's a cheque for two hundred and fifty, because I daresay you have not much of your last quarter's allowance in your pocket, if the truth were known. Well, never mind. Now go, for I have a great deal of business to transact. My love to my daughter." With this speech father and son parted. "Perhaps it's as well as it is, the boy never seemed to appreciate Lady Di, and she may not object to take me; at

any rate, I'll try. She is not what every one calls pretty; it takes an educated taste to admire her"—(it did, indeed)—"she is so high bred." Thus mused Mr. Lysle when his son had left him alone. "I wonder what Gus will say to a mother-in-law? He will be very savage, but I have a right to do as I like, and I am not such an old man. Why should I not marry and enjoy life? By George, I will! If I give Gus five thousand a-year it will be very handsome, and of course he will have more at my death. Yes, that's what I will do. Who knows, Gus may have younger brothers and sisters to share with yet," and the old man chuckled. "Taking one thing with another, it's rather a good job Gus did not knuckle to Lady Diana. I am not so slim and fashionable as that boy, yet a woman of sense like Lady Di will think none the less of me on that account—indeed, would rather prefer me," said the pompous old man.

"I say, what's up to-day? First Mr. Gustave comes here, and then the governor goes out smirking as though somebody had made him an earl. By Jove! there's something going on behind the scenes, or I'm a Dutchman," said one of the clerks, after Mr. Lysle

had gone through the outer office on his way to his carriage.

"Nobody said you were not a native of Holland," replied a fellow-clerk; "indeed, from your great affection for schnapps, I should say you'd been brought up there. But joking apart, the governor looks in a jolly good humour this morning; perhaps he's going to be married."

There was a general laugh at this, but business hours now drawing to a close, the conversation ceased, and each went his way, though the unwonted appearance of Gustave, and the still later amiable expression on the banker's face was the subject of conversation in more than one genteel household that evening.

The banker drove straight to the house in May Fair, where the father of the peerless Lady Diana resided. It was a little squeezed-up house near a mews, its smallness only compensated by being in a very aristocratic neighbourhood. Mr. Lysle, in spite of his pomposity, felt nervous as he drew up before the abode of the Rosemeres, and almost wished she might not be at home, but he soon rallied to the sense of his own importance; and when the answer to his inquiry "If the Coun-

tess, or Lady Diana, were at home?" was in the affirmative, he boldly entered the diminutive passage styled by courtesy "the hall," and followed the very big footman up the very narrow stairs, who threw open the door, and ushered the banker into the presence of the Countess and her daughter. It was a small room, cluttered up with old china monsters, carved ivory, and a great deal of Berlin wool work; the atmosphere was close, with the combined scent of dead rose-leaves and the odour from the stables close at hand. The earl was not rich, and did not possess a town house, always taking a furnished one during the season; and this one, in spite of its many drawbacks, was quite expensive enough for the Rosemere pocket. The Countess, a would-be young old lady, about sixty, was lying on a sofa near the fire reading a novel, for she was of a sentimental turn of mind, was a tall, thin woman, very highly rouged, with a set of fine false teeth, lack-lustre blue eyes, and a simpering school-girl manner. She had been a beauty in her youth; and now, although all vestiges had long since faded, she still kept up the pretty little petulant, coquettish ways that did such execution some forty years before. One great

drawback, however, to her present fascination was, that she suffered from a chronic cold in her head, which gave her pretty child-like speeches a strange effect at times, as they were delivered, in a snuffling voice, through the length of her aristocratic nose, converting "moon" into "boon," and other little eccentricities of the kind.

The object of Mr. Lysle's adoration was sitting bolt upright (she always did sit bolt upright on principle) with a book of serious character in her hands. Lady Diana never read novels, but delighted in such works as "A Scream from the Bottomless Pit," "The Sinner's Punishment," "The Burning Lake," etc., etc.

"Oh, you daughty man," said the Countess, tapping him with her fan, "wherever have you been? and how is Mr. Gustave?"

"I hope I see your ladyship well," said the banker, taking a seat near the antiquated belle and the fair Lady Diana, "and have you really missed me? How delightful!" and the ridiculous old fellow tried to look sentimental, which, not according well with his peculiar style of beauty, had the effect of making him bear a still more striking resemblance than ever to a large tom cat.

Lady Diana did the strict propriety manner; her mother was gushing, she was stately and serious, as became one of her distinguished race. How indeed could she be otherwise? some young ladies asked, with the Rosemere nose weighing for ever on her mind, but then of course that was only envy most likely on their part, having only little insignificant noses themselves; however, no matter from what cause, Lady Diana was of a serious and religious turn of mind, the sort of religion that looks well after the affairs of your neighbour, and if you see any little shadows, brings them to light for all the world to see, unless they affect yourself, and then keeps them in the dark as much as possible. She was also great at missionary meetings, to convert the heathen abroad, but ignoring such vulgar creatures as the heathen at home; she was very charitable, always making little useful articles, for which, no doubt, she had her reward in the gratitude of the recipients of her bounty; she did not affect fancy work, no, she considered that loss of time; she was generally to be found making such things as nice warm flannel petticoats for the Hottentots, and marking nice instructive little pocket-handkerchiefs with Watts' Hymns, and scriptural texts

(very improving to the mind, especially when on pocket-handkerchiefs), for the Zoolu Caffirs. She attended such mild dissipations as tea-meetings largely, and was one of the Rev. Obadiah Gulwell's most shining lights, so altogether it was unknown the good she did; but another of her great works must not be omitted, she was a most warm advocate for sending Bibles and tracts to all possible and impossible parts of the globe, printed in the English language, of course, so that they might be widely read.

Just when the banker entered, however, she was not engaged in any of her useful work, but improving her mind with the last beautiful sermon of the Rev. Obadiah Gulwell, proving most conclusively that all men who had not read the Bible and interpreted it his way, must certainly be condemned to the bottomless pit; this was, of course, very consoling to Lady Diana with her peculiar ideas on religion, but she put down her book when the banker entered, for he was a favourite with Lady Diana. Was he not so immensely rich? and then did he not give very largely to those charities where his name was likely to figure, and whose tendencies coincided with the pious Lady Diana's views; besides, he had a son,

whose mournful black eyes had melted poor Lady Diana's heart.

After a time the Countess, who in spite of her love of admiration and coquetry, was a sensible, shrewd, far-seeing woman, left the room for a moment; he has come for something, she thought, so I may as well give Diana a chance, for if she does not get off this season she never will, and perhaps he has come to propose to her, on behalf of his son. When they were alone the banker felt for the second time that day nervous, but again his own importance came to his aid when he made his declaration; the lady listened in astonishment and dismay, she had hoped for the son, but lo and behold! the father asked her hand for himself. When she looked at the vulgar, podgy figure, the greasy-looking fat face, and contrasted them with the appearance of his son, she almost felt tempted to refuse him, but the thought of his wealth, and her own poverty, decided her, and she consented to bestow her hand and Rosemere nose on him, provided her father approved the match. The banker caught her thin bony hand, and covered it with kisses, and then rushed off to find the Earl, while Lady Diana buried her head in the sofa cushions, and cried bitterly; her romance

was over, for narrow-minded, plain, middle-aged Diana had given that portion of her anatomy called heart, to Gustave, and now she was going to be his mother-in-law, poor woman; and yet was she to be pitied? had she not gained a husband at last? a plebeian, 'tis true, but rich, oh so rich! and any husband was better than none, so the banker's suit prospered.

CHAPTER XVII.

LOUIE'S TRIAL.

WHIZ, whiz, whirl, whirl, went the express train, leafless trees seemed dancing a jig, or turning round and round in an insane manner, the very fences and gates, hedges and telegraph posts look as if endowed with the power of motion, and the passengers nod and bob like so many marionettes. Gustave was on his way to Weston Park, as fast as the express would take him, but fifty miles an hour was not fast enough for him, he would have gone by telegraph if it had been possible; however, as that in the present age was out of his reach, whatever it may arrive at in the future, he was obliged to content himself with the train. He had laid in a stock of literature, and perseveringly attempted to read for some time, in spite of the lines bobbing about in a most uncomfortable manner; at

length he gave it up, his mind got so confused over his book by the constant movement, that it was no use trying to delude himself into the belief that he understood what he read, so he settled down in a corner, to think, and look out on the bare bleak landscape.

How happy he felt! In another hour (and out came the watch that had been consulted at least twenty times since the train left London just one hour and ten minutes ago) he should be at the station, and in less than two at the home of his darling; now she was an heiress would her fortune have altered her he wondered? and what sort of a place was Weston Park? And then he fell to pitying the poor baronet who was now a wanderer, and the woman he had loved, and their son, outcasts from society! It seemed very sad, though he had no reason to complain, for he benefited more from the change than any one, —was he not the husband of the heiress? Husband! yes, there was no fear for the future, Louie and her fortune were his—thanks to his foresight; how surprised Louie's mother would be if the girl had not told her the history of the secret marriage! Of course there would be a grand public ceremony to go through, but that would only be for the

form, the real one had been performed in the little church at Troll, a village three miles from Combe; nothing could set that aside, even if Lady Weston wished to do so. And he congratulated himself again.

Alas! no; nothing could set the ceremony performed in that little village church aside, as he would find out to his agony; he was married fast enough; but to the wrong sister. Station after station was passed, the whistle sounded, and Gustave arrived at his destination. It was about five o'clock when he found himself on the platform of the small station at Snelling.

"How far is it to Weston Park?" he asked of the solitary porter who had collected his luggage, and now stood awaiting his directions where it was to be sent.

"Weston Park, sir, be five mile from here, but if you be coming to see Sir Herbert and Lady Weston you'll be disappointed, for there has been a sad business, and poor Lady Isobel, who was as good a lady as ever breathed, turns out, so they say; but I don't believe a word of it, not to be Lady Weston after all; it's a hard blow for the poor, for they've lost as good a squire as ever lived, and then this

other lady as turned out our dear lady, and is living at the hall, is not like them."

Gustave was not pleased to hear Louie's mother spoken of in this way, so he said in his most haughty tone, "Get me a fly or something, I am a visitor to Lady Weston."

The man, crestfallen, ran to execute his bidding.

"So the new regime does not seem very popular amongst the bucolics; of course it must be difficult to please every one."

The man returned with the fly, and after depositing all Gustave's luggage on the roof, stood a moment, and then summoning up his courage, said, "I hope, sir, you won't think anything about what I told you, and mention it to Lady Weston up at the park yonder, because my poor mother who has a little farm on the estate might suffer."

"Oh, I shall not say a word about it, my good man, only be careful in future how you give your opinions to strangers."

This piece of advice given, Gustave drove off in the same lumbering machine that ten days before had brought Mr. Matcham with such ill news to the Hall.

Every one knows how dull a late afternoon in the country is at the end of Februarv as a

rule; sometimes, it is true, we have spring days in that month, but they are like angels' visits, few and far between, and certainly the closing in of this particular afternoon was not like one of the celestial visitations; the frost had given way, and a dull raw mist enveloped everything. It was impossible to go beyond a foot pace, the thaw having made the roads dangerous. The landscape so pretty and peaceful in summer time, looked dreary and desolate. Now the gaunt trees stretched forth their leafless branches, dripping with moisture, and the wintry twilight was closing in, covering hill and dale with a grey, leaden veil. It was not an inspiriting evening, to say the least of it; even Gustave who was so soon to see the object of his adoration, began to feel his spirits flag; he was not one to give way to dreary influences, so he tried to hum a tune, and then began to whistle the sprightliest of waltzes, but somehow or other it sounded very like a dirge in the lumbering old vehicle, which with its joltings and bumpings stifled and muffled the clear tone.

"It's no use, I can't sing, or whistle, that's certain; they say music hath charms, etc., but it's plain that the invisible mystical *they* never tried it in a fly; by the way, why do

people call these awful inventions flys? out of derision, I suppose; now, if they had said drones there might be some sense in it, but fly! it is ridiculous; yet 'what's in a name?' the poet says; what, indeed, in this case? I can't imagine how it is that some poor wretches can go out for an airing in a fly and think it a pleasure, but *chacun à son goût*, and I suppose there are individuals who like to be well jolted up and down, and travel in a stuffy thing similar to this, at the rate of two miles and a half an hour. Yes! our flys and four-wheeled growlers are institutions like our glorious constitution that we make such a fuss about. I think they are all three very hurtful to individual constitutions; for instance, the fly and the growler must be bad for the digestion, while our glorious constitution, liberty, and all the rest of it sometimes gets hold of the wrong man or woman, condemns them, and then when they find out they are innocent, grants them a free pardon! pardon! for doing nothing! how kind! That pardon must be awfully hard to swallow, and harder to digest. I wonder they don't say you must work out your sentence, because if you did not commit such and such crime you ought to have done so, and how dare you be inno-

cent when the infallible judge and the twelve infallible old women, composing the jury, have thought you guilty, it is most presumptuous, and I'm not sure whether it ought not to be accounted a sort of treason. If the enlightened jury condemn you, what right have you to be innocent? it's preposterous, of course, these highly educated, intellectual butchers, and bakers, and candlestick makers, must know better than any one else, are they not an institution of our glorious country? Our magistrates, too, in this land of liberty, send a man to prison because he does not go to church; there's nothing like making people think as you do, by fair means if you can; and if not, use a little wholesome severity; what right has a poor man to a will of his own in such matters? none at all; he must not think differently to his superiors; if his squire 'believe in the Church by Law established,' surely it is good enough for a labourer; follow the leader, like a flock of sheep, and if one stray, bring him back, *nolens volens.*"

It will be seen that the movement of the fly had not only shaken Gustave's nerves, but materially ruffled the serenity of his temper, by the foregoing conversation, addressed or rather growled forth to himself, there being no

listener unfortunately present to profit by the words of wisdom which fell from his lips; and the reader will also be convinced that he was not a young man of religious disposition; no, the truth was that Gustave had seen so much cant and humbug, that he had run, alas, to the other extreme.

The Low Church he detested, because he drew all his conclusions and ideas relative to its doctrines from Lady Diana's principles, and those of her set; so he put down the whole body as hypocrites, forgetting that there were good and earnest people among them, who strove to walk in their Master's footsteps, and did believe in charity. His experience of High Church, so called, was not much better, for an aunt of his, (sister to his dead mother), who had married a rich baronet, had a pet clergyman, who was Gustave's aversion; this man created a revolution in the church when he had come into the living, which was in the gift of the baronet, and the latter, at his wife's desire, presented it to the Rev. Algernon Marchurch. This man was one of those very virtuous people, who are continually saying, I am not as other men, follow my example, and you must be right, see what a good pastor I am.

Gustave was disgusted beyond measure with this pious clergyman, and this is how it occurred. The young man, who was a great favourite both with his aunt and her husband, had been in the habit of staying with them in his holidays, for having no children of their own, they looked upon him as a son. Now the church and graveyard were situated in a very romantic spot just outside Gower Park (as the estate of his uncle, Lord Gower, was called), and had always been a favourite resort with the boy; he loved the old church, with its tall, grey, weather-beaten tower, and the peaceful graves over which the long grass waved, and the wild flowers grew, undisturbed by the hand of man; the new rector, however, did not admire this state of things, he had no eye for the picturesque, he wanted to make improvements, no matter, although to gratify his whim, he must disturb bones that had rested quietly perhaps a century. What were a few mouldy old bones to the Rev. Mr. Marchurch's pleasure? Nothing, so he, this great scholar and gentleman, turned resurrectionist. They were for the most part the remains of the poor that he desecrated, so of course he did it with impunity; but he did not stop here, he sold the railings belonging to the graves of those

long since dead, to pay for the expenses of his whim, and then, when remonstrated with, attacked his neighbours in print, and this Vandal of the nineteenth century unfortunately was entrusted with the care of men's souls.

"Pretty care he would take of souls indeed," Gustave said, "when he so well protected their bones."

Lady Gower stood by her pet pastor, and Gustave had his first quarrel with his aunt on his account, so no wonder he did not regard Mr. Marchurch with feelings of affection, or his religious principles with respect. At length Gustave's musings were brought to a close by the entry of the lumbering old vehicle into the lodge gates of Weston Park. The young man's heart beat fast as he looked on the extensive domain that in all probability one day would be his. He did not love Louie any the more because she was now the heiress instead of the simple little country girl he had thought her, but he was not insensible to the good fortune she possessed, neither did he pretend any distaste for riches.

A few moments, and he was at the house itself; he was evidently expected, for a servant led him to a room, where he found every-

thing prepared, and, making a hasty toilet, he rang for the man to conduct him into the presence of his beloved. He was led into the small morning room, which had been the favourite apartment of poor Isobel; it was now given up to Louie.

The girl did not know of Gustave's arrival, and was sitting alone over the fire, pretending to read, but in reality thinking of her lover, and mourning over his silence.

The door opened, a voice called "Louie," and with a scream of delight she flew into his arms.

"My life, my love, how pale you look!" said the young man, when the first greetings were over. "You see, love, I came directly you asked me, and you must go back and be introduced to my father, he is most anxious to see his new daughter."

Louie blushed at this, and a puzzled look stole over her face.

"My letter, darling! which one?" she asked.

"Why, my wife, the one you wrote me the day before yesterday."

"The day before yesterday, Gustave?"

"Yes, beloved, what have you forgotten; here it is, next my heart. You must not

coquette now, my own, it is too late after marriage, you know."

"My darling, I am no coquette, I love you with all my heart and soul, and you know it."

"Yes, little wife!"

"Not yet, sir; you must not usurp the privilege of calling me that name before we are married," she said, archly.

"Before, Louie? why you do not mean to deny to me that you are my wife, whatever we may say to the world. Now you see, Louie, I was right when I insisted on that proof of your love."

"Gustave!" almost screamed the girl, "what do you mean?"

"Louie," and the tone of her lover was almost stern, "what means all this acting? What am I to think of it? that you no longer care for me? but I cannot release you, for you are my lawful wife. Only the day before yesterday I had this letter, where you signed yourself by my name," and he handed the note to the trembling girl.

"Oh, Gustave! am I mad, or dreaming?"

Her pale face and agonized expression convinced him that there was no pretence, and then an awful fear crossed his mind, "was she insane?"

"Louie, for pity's sake answer me, did you not marry me at Troll?"

"No!"

"Did you not write that letter?"

"No!"

"My God! she is mad!"

"I am not mad, Gustave," she said, in a pleading, piteous voice.

"Ah, my love, why have you never written to me all this weary time?"

It was now Gustave's turn to look bewildered.

"Not written, Louie? I have, and here are all your answers, full of love and devotion. Let this end, I beseech you, or I shall die, my wife—"

"Is here, Gustave," said the voice of Lola, as she entered the room.

"I am your wife; forgive me! forgive me!" she cried passionately, as she saw an unspeakable look of mingled doubt and horror, blended with aversion, come over Gustave's face. "I have deceived you wrongly, but I did it because I love you more than my own soul! I have sacrificed everything to gain you!"

Louie, at this fatal revelation, fell as one dead at her sister's feet. Gustave rushed for-

ward to lift up the senseless form, and covered her face with hungry kisses.

"My murdered darling!" he groaned. "Oh, that she might never awake to this miserable life again!" and then turning savagely to Lola, he addressed her in tones quivering and chafing with hatred. "So you are my wife, you mad, blind fool! Did you ever think to gain my love by such means? that I, who love an angel, could ever stoop to entertain one thought, except of the most intense hatred, towards such an unwomanly creature. You think you have separated us, but I will move heaven and earth to upset this iniquitous act! You have ruined two lives by your treachery and villainy, and then you ask for forgiveness!" He spurned her from him, for she had fallen on her knees before him. "I hate you! I curse you! may you—"

"Hush, Gustave!" said Louie, recovering from her stupor, and staggering to her miserable sister's side. "You shall not curse her; I forgive her, though she has broken my heart!"

With these words she again gave way, and sank senseless on the floor. For the first time Lola awoke to the sense of what she had done; she had killed her sister, and gained

the curse of the man she had so cruelly entrapped. What would she not now have given to undo her fatal work? but alas! it was too late, Gustave's aversion and loathing cut her wretched heart like a knife. It seemed as though some demon had led her on blindfold, and had suddenly withdrawn the bandage from her eyes, and let her see the awful abyss into which she was falling.

"Gustave, Gustave!" she cried, in the anguish of her heart, "I will not ask you to forgive me; but oh! God! do not look at me like that. It was for love of you; yes, I know now I have forfeited the name of woman in your eyes by my unholy passion; but she whom I have injured most has forgiven me! I have been blind, mad, but now what an awakening!"

"Stay, do not speak more, leave me, relieve me of your presence, before I forget that you are a woman! Is it possible that there can be a God who can allow such iniquity? Ah, Louie, Louie! my love, my love! I was so happy this morning, I so longed to see your sweet face! Ah, God in Heaven! what an ending, and through no fault of ours. My darling! my darling!" groaned the unfortunate young man, clasping the inanimate form

of Louie in his arms. "Oh, that we could die together at this moment. It was you, then," turning again fiercely on Lola, "who kept back all my letters, and saw your only sister pining away and dying at my seeming neglect. Look at her pale face and wasted form, all your work! Go at once, or I shall forget you are her sister, and curse you!"

Lola went forth from that little cheerful room, where such a sad drama had been acted, bowed down by the curse of Cain, for she knew she had murdered her sister, just as surely as if she had taken a knife and stabbed her to the heart; and for what? to gain the horror and disgust of the man she loved: of the three she was the most miserable, and the most to be pitied. She would gladly have died that moment, but she had not courage to commit suicide.

After the wretched girl had left the room, poor Louie came gradually back to consciousness. Gustave saw that she had, as she told him, received her death blow; she might live for months, perhaps, but her gentle heart was broken. What he suffered, was great indeed, for he loved this girl so dearly.

"Gustave," she said, "dear Gustave, although we are separated in this world, we

may meet again in the next, if we only try to do our duty; we should have been so happy in our love that perhaps we might have forgotten that there is another life after this, but to part like this, oh, my darling, it is hard!" and the fragile form of the girl was shaken, like a reed in a tempest, by the violence of her emotion. "Yet, poor Lola, she is more to be pitied than either of us, for we are the injured, she the injurer. What will become of her? for she must henceforth be a prey to remorse."

"You are an angel, indeed," said Gustave, looking almost with awe on the pale face of the girl he loved, "you can forgive the hand that has struck your death blow, but *I never* can! Let her suffer; but what can her sufferings be to mine, at the loss of you?"

"My poor Gustave, I cannot comfort you, for my heart too is broken; but have pity on Lola, she is my twin sister, and, oh, Gustave, Gustave! she must have been mad when she did us this cruel injury!"

At this moment, Pauline entered, in search of Louie. She stood dumbfounded at the sight that met her eyes. She had expected smiles and happiness, and she saw tears and heart-rending sorrow instead.

"Louie! Mr. Lysle, what is the meaning of this grief?" she asked.

Then Gustave poured forth the whole of the sad story. When he came to the fatal marriage, the wretched woman buried her face in her hands: and when the recital was finished, and she lifted her head, she looked as though she had lived through years, in those few moments of suffering. Revenge—revenge she had cherished as an idol—was recoiling on herself, and threatening to crush her.

"Where is this creature?" she gasped, "find her, that I may bestow on her a mother's curse!"

"No," cried Louie, "for my sake, if you do not wish to see me die at your feet, have mercy on her. Mother, remember she is your child, and my twin sister."

"For your sake then I will not, but I can never look on her face again."

"Hush, mother! if I forgive her—and I do—you must."

"I cannot, Louie. You are an angel, and can pardon the wretch who has killed you, but my wrong is far greater, and I cannot, no I cannot forgive. Oh, my child, my daughter, I have loved you before everything; for you I

have schemed; for your happiness I would have yielded my life. Now, when I had succeeded to the height of my ambition, for you, my darling, to see you struck down and not curse the hand that has done it, I——"

"Stay, mother. May you not have been a little to blame also? have you not loved me to the exclusion of your other child? and may not your indifference to her have first implanted jealousy and envy in my poor sister's heart? Mother, remember she is your child; let me plead for her, now all the world will turn aside from her; but you, mother, do not you, for my sake, for the sake of the love you have given me. I ask you to stand by Lola; I shall not be long with you, I feel, so grant my request."

Pauline was torn by the most agonising feelings. She had, as she said, loved this daughter, almost to adoration; she had made her her idol, her all in all. What if there should be truth in Louie's words, and this very love have been the means of bringing this crushing sorrow on the head of the child for whom she would have died! At last she turned to Gustave. "Leave us alone," she said, "for a time." And the young man

went silently forth to wrestle with his misery and wretchedness alone.

What passed during that sorrowful interview between Louie and her mother, no one ever knew, but the beautiful, proud, revengeful Pauline left the little cheerful morning-room changed indeed. She went straight to the chamber where Lola, in her misery, had fled, after the reproaches of Gustave. She found the girl with a white drawn face, and eyes glazed and tearless, but when she saw her mother, tried to summon up the old defiant expression.

"I do not come to reproach you," said Pauline, in a voice totally unlike her old ringing tones, so hollow were they, and sad, "but at your sister's prayer, to forgive you; but I pray you, not to let me see you for a day or two: give me time to get used to my misery, and then perhaps I may be able to bear your presence by and by; now, the blow is too recent." With these words Pauline left the room.

This was far more terrible to the miserable girl than the most awful reproaches; hard words, and even curses might have enabled her to bear perhaps what she had done, but forgiveness took away the last prop. She

could not bear it, her brain seemed giving way, horrible shapes and frightful terrors crowded her heated imagination, and before night she lay tossing wildly in all the agonies of brain fever. Truly revenge was recoiling on the head of Pauline.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ISSIE'S DARK HOUR.

"HUSH! hush, Willy darling, or you'll wake mamma; run away there's a dear, and play with Letty," said Muriel to her little nephew.

Aunt Rella looked worn, as well she might, for she had been nursing her sister Isobel through a most terrible illness. It was now five weeks since the Sunday when poor Lady Weston had fled from her husband's roof. She had come straight to her sister, knowing, that in her kind heart, she would find sympathy and love to help her in her hour of trial, but it had been too much for her, and she had been stricken down. For a month and more she had hovered between life and death, but her spirit was brought back from the confines of the other world, as it were, by

her sister's devotion and care. Now she was gradually mending, though very slowly, and quiet was most strictly enjoined by the doctors.

Poor little Willy was too young to understand what had taken place, but he knew his mother was ill, and could not comprehend why he was not allowed to be with her. For some time he would not be consoled, but little Letty Muriel's baby girl and Mr. Curtise gradually comforted the boy, although even now he would often run to his mother's door, or sit on the staircase, for an hour at the time, and to-day, Muriel had found him crying when she came out of the sick room.

"Oh, Aunt Rella, tell me is mamma better?"

"Yes, darling, much better."

"Shall I see her soon?"

"Yes."

"And papa too? Jane said I had no papa; that is not true, is it?"

"Certainly not, my boy. You have a dear papa, you know very well, but he is obliged to go away for a little time, and you must be a man, and take care of mamma until he comes back. Now go and play with Letty, and never mind what Jane says. I must speak

to Lloyd about sending that girl away, talking about such things to the child. I wonder if nurse knows anything about it! I will inquire. Such a sensitive child as the dear boy is too."

Oaklands, the home of the Curtises, was twenty-five miles from London, on the banks of the Thames. It was a charming old-fashioned rambling house with lovely gardens reaching down to the water's edge. April had just commenced, the leaves were bursting forth, and the birds beginning to sing: Oaklands was a pretty place at all times, but in the spring, it was perfection.

Muriel was very fond of her home. She loved to sit and watch the shining river, or be rowed on its surface by her husband, as much her lover now as on the day he had first disclosed his love, and asked her to marry him, although five years had passed since then. Mr. Curtise loved boating, it was almost a passion with him, and Muriel liked to indulge him in it.

They were a very happy couple too, and life at Oaklands had gone on like a pretty rippling poem until this dreadful shadow had fallen on Isobel. Muriel loved her sister dearly, and made her sorrow her own, and

Lloyd grieved because his wife did. Moreover, he felt almost a brother's love for the little fairy Isobel, as he called her. So Oaklands for the first time since Muriel had reigned over it was under a cloud. Lloyd could not take his wife for their accustomed rows because her time was fully employed tending her poor sister; however, he did not complain, but tried to console himself by taking out Wilfred and teaching the boy his own favourite aquatic amusement.

Lloyd Curtise was by no means a handsome or brilliant man; most people wondered what the clever, beautiful Muriel had seen in him, but he was good to the core, and Muriel saw underneath the plain exterior his true and noble heart and nature. Yes, Lloyd Curtise was a good man in the truest acceptance of the word. He did not belong to that set who think it a sin to laugh and be merry, not he; he loved mirth, and no one laughed more heartily than he. His goodness consisted in universal charity; he remembered his Saviour's golden rule, and loved his neighbour as himself. It was not what he gave away, although that was considerable, but he had always a kind word and genial smile for every one, and a tender, feeling heart, full of sym-

pathy for the sorrows of others. When he assisted any one he did it willingly and gracefully, not grudgingly, as some do, robbing the gift of half its value. Then, again, he was old-fashioned in his ideas, but they were good and sterling, for all that. For instance, one of his peculiarities was, that he could not see the difference the world makes between the faults of men and women, casting the unfortunate woman outside the pale of society, and accepting the man who has been equally to blame; no "sweet wicked creature, who was such a charming fellow, you know," and who perhaps had made one or two homes desolate by stealing the fairest flower, and then casting it aside to perish, or smirched the honour of an honest house, but "was so fascinating and clever," that society shut its eyes to these little defects, ever found a warm welcome at Lloyd Curtise's house; and yet he was not a ridiculous simpleton, making other people's private affairs his study; he was only a chivalrous gentleman, rather a rare thing in this age of improvement, perhaps, but such as he is I must describe him.

In appearance he was a tall man, made rather for strength than beauty, with long limbs, a moderately high forehead, kind, light

grey eyes, nose and mouth of the ordinary English type, and very light hair and beard. He was a man you would pass a hundred times without noticing except you were in trouble, and then it was a face where you would expect to find sympathy. Everybody told their troubles to Lloyd before they had known him half an hour; little babies would leave their mothers' arms to go to him; among women and children of all classes he was a favourite, because instinct told them he was their friend. Young men of the period called him slow, old-fashioned, and all the rest of it, but only behind his back, for they knew, notwithstanding all his gentleness to those who needed protection, he knew how to resent an insult as well as any man. Although fond of peace, he could, if occasion required, show that his Christianity was inclined to be muscular.

"Well, Willy, my boy, what's the matter?" he asked, as he met his nephew on the way to the nursery and noticed the traces of tears.

Willy at once told his troubles, and what Jane had said.

Lloyd looked vexed; he hated gossip of any kind in his house, so he strode off with

his nephew to visit Letty and call Jane to account.

Miss Letty, a fat, chubby little lady somewhat under the mature age of three years, screamed with delight when she beheld her father; and the offending Jane not being there, Letty was soon installed on her usual throne, papa's shoulder, and the three became soon engaged in the most noisy game of romps, the greatest body of the party Lloyd himself. The glee was at its height when Muriel entered also to discover the delinquent Jane. She smiled when she saw the happy group, but Queen Letty was soon dethroned when Muriel appeared, and the two children left to play by themselves.

"Do you want me, dear?" asked Lloyd. "Now I look at you in the light, Rella, you look pale. The fact is, little woman, you have been confining yourself too much lately. You can leave Isobel for a little time to-day, as she is so much better, and come with me for a row, just for half an hour. I've been wanting to see you, for I have received a letter from Max Werther, and he says Miss Cross is going to be a grand success. By-the-bye, her name is changed to Fräulein Ertsurt, because Max says her style is altogether more

in the German than the Italian school; he also goes on to say that there is little or nothing to teach her, for she is a born artiste, and has studied deeply; in fact, he is most enthusiastic about her."

"I'm so glad, Lloyd; but do you know the good creature has written to me herself? A letter full of the sweetest, kindest things, and speaks so nicely about poor Issie. She saw all about the sad affair in the papers, and mentions it so delicately. That woman is a real gem of great value, which only required a little polish to shine resplendent. I'm more pleased than I can tell that she is to have a scope for her talents, instead of wasting all her life at the toil and drudgery of teaching; not that I mean to run down for one moment forming the youthful mind, so you need not look so grave. I think there is no nobler employment in the world for women, but we all have not the vocation, you know, and Clara Cross was evidently intended by nature for what she is going to be. It's rather late in the day to find out, but better late than never."

"Yes, little woman, but she owes it all to you. What a clever, far-seeing creature you are!"

"You must not pay me so many compliments," answered Muriel, laughing, "or I shall get conceited."

"No fear of that, my darling. I only hope Letty will grow up like her mother; if she is half as brilliant and charming, she'll do."

"And I hope she'll grow up like her father; half as good, noble, and true; then, indeed, I shall be proud of her."

"Come, come, little woman, we are getting quite touching in our mutual admiration. If there was anybody by they would think we were a couple of geese; besides, we are wasting all this beautiful warm morning while we might be on the river, bringing back roses to your dear cheeks. When do you think poor Issie will be well enough to get out a little?"

"In another week, I trust. But have you heard from Herbert?"

"Yes, and I want to talk to you about that. He is quite broken-hearted; he has enclosed a note for Isobel, which, now she is stronger, you had better give her. He has sailed by this time for Africa, to join some exploring expedition, to try by danger and excitement to bury his sorrow in oblivion. He has settled all he can, namely, a thousand

a-year, on Issie and Wilfred. The estates he cannot will, and if anything should happen to him, as Roland is dead, they must go to this woman's elder daughter. Poor Herbert!"

"Aye, poor Herbert! indeed! I grieve for him; but you say as Roland is dead—as you know, Lloyd, I have a presentiment he is not; and now I should be very glad if he did turn up, to oust this hateful woman out of Weston Park—how I detest her!"

"Hush, Rella, you must not talk like that. I like her as little as you do; but do not forget, dearest, that she thinks she too has wrongs. But I cannot make out how it is my little woman has presentiments. You must get these things out of your head, darling, for they will grow upon you more and more. Roland is dead enough, depend upon it; he would never have kept away all this time if he had been alive. What had he to gain by so doing? Nothing at all. No, no, Roland Weston is dead. I have other news for you, Rella, this morning. I hear from Lincoln that that woman who has brought such sorrow on Isobel has not escaped scathless. It appears that one of the twin daughters, the elder, was engaged to young Lysle. You met him at the Rosemeres', when they

were living in obscurity under some romantic circumstances or other. They saved his life, and he became attached to the elder girl; but her sister fell in love with him as well, though she managed to keep it secret. Knowing he did not care for her, however, it appears that this young man requited the hospitality and assistance he received by trying to persuade the girl he loved to consent to a secret marriage. But she, who, Lincoln says, is very sweet and good, refused point blank. He then went to her sister for advice, and opened his heart to her. She promised to bring her sister round to his way of thinking, making him promise to ask no questions, and on no account to speak to his lady-love on the subject, and to make all his preparations so as to be ready at a moment's notice—which it appears he did; and on the night he left was married, as he thought, to the object of his choice, while in reality he had tied himself to the other. The fellow must have been a great fool, I think, and deserved all he got. But I have not ended my story. When he hears she is an heiress, he comes to claim her, congratulating himself on his wisdom in insisting on this clandestine marriage, when lo and behold, the *dénouement* proves he has married

the wrong one, and a fearful scene is the consequence. The nice girl will never get over the disappointment, they say, and the other, the real wife, is so overcome by her sister's misery and Lysle's reproaches, that it has brought on brain fever. As for the mother, she idolized her elder daughter, and neglected the younger, and it is supposed that the younger girl, who is very revengeful, hit on this plan to secure the man she loved and vex her mother at the same time, not heeding the consequences. However, it is a sad story. The miserable woman who has been all these years nursing revenge, little foresaw what was in store for herself. As for Lysle, they say he is like a madman, because he really loved the good girl. His father, old Lysle, has proposed to Lady Diana, and is going to marry her, so that he will not get all the old man's money. Well it is a strange world we live in, but there is a hand above that shapes all our ways, and if we only wait patiently, although the wicked may prosper for a time, it is not for ever. Not that I can judge who is wicked or who is not, for perhaps we should none of us do very well under temptations you see. It is so much easier to find the holes in other people's coats than discover the rents in our own gar-

ments. Now, after that edifying little sermon, suppose, darling, you go and get your hat, and let us take advantage of the sunshine—but here is this letter for Issie."

"I don't think, Lloyd, I'll give it to her until I come back; and yet perhaps she would rather read it when she is alone. I'll be down in a moment."

And Muriel tripped away to her sister's room, where we will follow her.

Isobel sat propped up with pillows on a couch near the window, looking out on the smooth lawn, that sloped down to the bright shining river. It was a fair prospect that her eyes rested on, but it brought no joy to her bruised heart. Her thoughts were far away, in the beautiful midland home, hers no longer, where she had been so happy. Lady Weston was greatly changed; her lithe figure had become positively shadowy in its thinness, and her large dark eyes wore a most piteous expression. Their intense melancholy cut Muriel to the heart.

"Well, darling," she said, as she kissed her sister tenderly, "are you strong enough to hear any news?"

"Yes, if it is about Herbert," replied Isobel.

"Will you then promise to be very good and brave, if I give you a letter from him?"

"Yes, yes, give it to me," and the invalid's pale cheeks flushed as she clutched at the precious letter eagerly.

She did not read it, but placed it in her bosom. Muriel saw the movement, and understood what it meant, so she went out of the room to join her husband, leaving Isobel alone to read the letter the man from whom she had been so cruelly parted had sent her.

"Oh, my darling," said poor Issie, as she covered the note with kisses, and lingered over each word of love it contained, with a sad, hungry gaze, "we must never be together again in this world, because it would be wrong, but his heart is mine, that she cannot take away. She has robbed me of name, fortune, home, and happiness, but his love she cannot possess. Poor, poor Herbert, he is more to be pitied than I, for I have Muriel and my boy to care for me, while he is alone. Yet, husband, for you are my husband, I would give all their love to hear you call me wife again and die. Ah, cruel fate! and cruel, cruel woman! to bring down such suffering on us. My poor boy! my brave, beautiful Willy! Ah, it is too hard! it is too hard!"

"Mamma, may I come in?" said the child's voice at that moment outside the door.

"Yes," replied Issie in a weak voice, which the quick ears of Willie caught, and he bounded into the room, but stopped short when he saw how pale and altered his mother looked.

"Ah, mamma," he cried, "how white you are! You are not going away to heaven to leave me all alone—say you are not!"

"No, darling, not if God will spare me. I will get well and strong, to take care of my little boy." And tears, blessed tears, came to the relief of her overcharged heart.

Willy had done her all the good in the world, for his presence reminded her she had something to live for still in this world—her boy, who had no one now to look to but herself. So a sweet peace fell on her bruised heart, and while the tears dropped from her eyes, Isobel resolved to take up her cross, and try and bear it with Christian fortitude.

An hour later, when Muriel returned, she found mother and child asleep in each other's arms. The tears were still wet on Issie's dark lashes, while a peaceful expression, that she had not seen since her great sorrow, rested on her sister's face. From that day Isobel mended. She strived to get well for her son's sake, and she succeeded.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SUDDEN JOURNEY.

We have left little Katie and Paul a long time; it is right we should now return to them. When Pauline made her final *coup* she left them at the old Combe House, under the care of Jacqueline for a while, because, in the first place, she did not wish to have them with her until she saw how things turned out, and in the second, she was obliged to leave some one in case Captain Paul should return, and it was necessary he should be told all the news. The young people were very happy, Paul enjoying everything in his own dreamy poetic fashion; and Katie pleased on account of being with him. The child's whole soul was wrapped up in her companion. It was charming to see her devotion, and pretty protecting care, towards the delicate lame youth.

Katie was as strong as a little pony, and with her flow of bright animal spirits, was the very best companion in the world for Paul, with his slight frame, and rather-inclined-to-be morbid character. Her joyousness corrected his melancholy, and her good, sound, practical common sense counterbalanced his highly imaginative temperament. And yet Katie could hardly be called a matter-of-fact child; far down in the depths of her shining nature there was a rich vein of poetry, and no one in this world had a more appreciative and enthusiastic admirer of his talents than Paul found in his little friend. These days passed in the most peaceful manner. It was true they could not get much out of doors, being winter, but they found plenty of amusement at home. Paul loved music, and Katie, as we know, had a passion for it; so the two used to sit sometimes for hours in their dreary down-stairs room, Paul curled up on an old sofa, and Katie playing the strains he loved best. Then in the long evenings, when the lamp was lit and the curtains drawn, it would be Paul's turn to amuse Katie, which he would do by reading aloud some thrilling tale of adventure or heroism, until the time arrived for the little household to retire for the night.

Time went very quickly and smoothly for the three inmates of the old house; none of them felt it hang heavily on their hands. Jacqueline had her thoughts, and, moreover, the charge of the house. Katie had Paul and her music; and he, owing to his affliction, had never had companions of his own sex, so to him it was simply what he had been used to all his life. True, they missed dear Louie, and Lola also, but they were soon to see them again, Pauline had told them; so they got on very well in the dreary Combe House. Paul gave Katie lessons; it was not an orthodox education for a young lady certainly, nevertheless it suited her character, for Katie was no common-place, every-day child, there was sterling stuff in her.

"How dark the clouds are out at sea this morning, Paul! look, do look! we shall have a storm. I'm so glad; it's so grand to watch the waves come raging up. I do so love to see the lightning flash, and hear the thunder roar. I don't think in any place the sea can be so wildly beautiful as on this coast—do you? I should like to live here all my life with you, listening to the sea, always foaming, always murmuring, never silent. It seems strange that any one can call the sound of it

monotonous; to me it is always different, ever changing. Hark now, as it dashes against the rocks! it seems like an angry roar, quite unlike the merry, tossing, dancing waves, in summer, or the lazy lapping on a calm, smooth day."

"Yes, Katie, I love the sea too, but it's very treacherous. Fancy the numbers of poor fellows who will go to their death in those waves we love."

"Oh, Paul, I never thought of that when I said I loved a storm. Poor fellows, indeed! Although I like the sea, I should not wish to be buried in it. There is something awful in the idea of going down, without a single thing to mark the spot of our watery grave, save a momentary ripple, as the waves close over our heads. How sad it must be to see the wrecks of the vessels and the bones of dead men down among the monsters of the deep! great ships full of treasure, now the home of all sorts of strange fish. Would you like to be a diver, Paul? I should not like to be one—not that I should be afraid—but it would be so weird down in the midst of the silent, mystic caves, all so quiet and still. The men who go down to see after the vessels that have sunk, and take their bearings—don't

they call it, Paul?—must be the bravest or the most callous men alive."

"I don't know about that, Katie, because they may be simply indifferent, and get used to it. You see it's their trade, and constant habit makes them familiar with the danger; so in the end they cease to be affected by what they see and encounter. Who can that be coming? Don't you hear the sound of wheels?"

Katie ran into a room overlooking the deserted court-yard, to find out who it was going to pay them a visit.

"Paul," she said, turning back hastily, "it's a carriage and pair, and two gentlemen have got out. Who can they be? and what do they want?"

Presently they heard the voice of Jacqueline in conversation with a man, and soon after she entered the room closely followed by a stranger.

"A gentleman wishes to speak to you," she said, addressing the youth, and pointing to the visitor, a forbidding-looking man, with black, shifting eyes; his clothes, which were those of a gentleman, did not appear to belong to him, or seem either to be the style he was in the habit of wearing.

"Mr. Paul Noir, I believe," he said, bowing.

"That's my name," said Paul, wondering what could be wanted with him.

"Then I have a message from your father, who has met with an accident, and wishes you to come to him at once."

"An accident," said Paul, getting pale. "Where is he? I will go at once."

"Let me go with you, Paul," pleaded Katie.

"No," said the man, "you had better stay here; we don't want any children."

Katie blushed indignantly at this rude refusal, and Paul, with his most haughty expression, said—

"Miss Jones shall accompany me if she choose, sir; my father will be glad to see her, I'm sure."

Katie felt very grateful, and flew to put on her hat and a warm shawl, and then helped Paul on with his coat, and wrapping a scarf round his throat, stood ready to go.

The man scowled at the two; but there was no help for it, so with an ill grace he consented to the child leaving with Paul.

Jacqueline looked puzzled as she stood in the old court watching them leave, and almost wished that she could stop their departure. "Strange," she said, as she watched the car-

riage drive away; "Paul ill, and to send for the boy like that! God grant there is no danger! Yet who is there in the world who would hurt Paul or Katie; they can have no enemies, so innocent and good as they are. No, it must be all right!"

At this moment she was startled by a peculiar whistle. "There's Paul himself—great God, what is the matter!"

She hastened to the back of the house, soon reaching the door that led on to the rocks. When she opened it, her surprise was increased, and her fears verified, as she gazed on the features of Captain Paul!

"Jacqueline," he said, "I came this way over the rocks because I did not know who might be here—but you look pale!" noticing her troubled face—"what is the matter? speak!"

"Did you not send for Paul, not half-an-hour ago?"

"Send for Paul—I should think not! what should I want with him—where is he?"

"Gone!"

"Gone! for goodness' sake, Jacqueline, speak out—tell me what you mean."

"I will. Not half-an-hour ago, a carriage came here with two men; one of them got

out and asked for young Mr. Paul Noir, said he must see him, as he had a message from his father, who had met with an accident, and had sent for him directly. Paul would go, and Katie went with him also, although the man objected to her going. Paul, Paul, what is it?" she asked, as he reeled like a drunken man.

"Matter enough, Jacqueline—it is that my only son, dearer to me than all else, is in the hands of my greatest enemy."

"In whose hands?"

"Roland Weston's."

Jacqueline screamed at the name.

"I never thought of him; but Paul, why should he hurt the boy!"

"Don't you see, for the sake of hurting me. He has found out by some devilish means where the boy was, and knowing how I loved him, has hit upon this plan to torment me. Ah! my son! the only one I had to love; my innocent, afflicted boy, what sufferings may be in store for you!"

And tears, hot, scalding tears that the prospect even of death for himself could never have brought, rained down his cheeks, at the thought of his son in the hands of his relentless enemy. Here was another instance of

revenge, turning like a savage monster and rending the breast that fostered it.

"This is not a time for snivelling," he said, impatiently dashing the moisture from his cheeks, "but for action. Oh, beware, Mr. Roland Weston, for although you have the trick in your favour at present, you may not win the game. If you touch a hair of that boy's head, I will have such vengeance on you that England shall ring with it. Now, Jacqueline, stay in this house and keep watch. Where is Pauline?"

When the woman told him all the news of her coming forward and claiming to be the mistress of Weston Park, and her triumphant success, a grim smile played about his face.

"Ah, well, I will go and give her notice of what has occurred, and commence my search for my boy. Good bye, Jacqueline, God bless you; you have been a good sister to Pauline and my worthless self. If you should never see me again, remember I was not unmindful of your great devotion to us. Again, sister, God bless you."

He imprinted a kiss on the forehead of the woman, and in another moment he was gone, on his road to the village of Combe. "They must have passed through that place," he

thought, and accordingly made his way in that direction, with a sad heart, to prosecute his search.

Jacqueline, when left alone, sat down on the stairs and cried as though her heart would break. Paul, her handsome step-brother, whom she loved so dearly, had told her he appreciated her devotion to himself and his sister, and unused as she was to caresses, his kindness touched her, and opened the flood-gates of her heart.

He would certainly have been a brute if he had not acknowledged her devotion, although she did not think that. She had all her life loved, with the fidelity of a dog, her handsome step-sister and brother; she had always been their slave since their birth, content if she only got a kind word from them occasionally; and now Paul, in the midst of his great grief, had spoken of his gratitude to her, she felt quite repaid for what she had suffered by those kind words and that little caress. Poor, plain, hard-featured, middle-aged Jacqueline, was a heroine in her way—mistaken, perhaps, but who can help admiring such devotion as she had shown, all her life, to her father's children? She had cast her lot with them, never changing; in the blackest storm, even when

crime stained, she clung on, loving, pitying, and protecting—a staunch friend that no trouble could tear away, through good and evil report she was still the same. Jacqueline was not a good woman in the literal sense of the word, and she was little better than a heathen as regarded religion, yet she was capable of a truthfulness, faithfulness, and a most devoted self-sacrifice, which would have shamed many the world called good and pious people.

"Oh dear," she cried, rocking herself to and fro, sobbing piteously, "what sorrow this dreadful revenge brings on the innocent! There is Louie, perhaps dying, through no fault of hers, but a victim of another's revenge; and now little Paul, who never hurt a fly even in his spotless life, may be at this moment suffering for the faults of others. Poor Paul, he has had reason, if ever man had, for his hatred of Roland Weston—but what has it brought him? Nothing but sorrow. Yet I even feel the passion rising in my heart as I think of that man, the evil genius of our family. Ah, miserable day! when he crossed our path. We were happy until he came like a serpent to poison all our lives; the cause of my father's death, Pauline

he deceived and cast aside, and Paul, poor, noble Paul, when I think of his wrongs, his broken heart and ruined life, I do not wonder at his hatred and thirst for vengeance. Yet when can all this end? When shall we have peace? Alas! never, I fear, until we are all lying cold and still in the grave. For my part, I would welcome death to-morrow, could I but see Paul and Pauline happy, which I fear will never be. How sad it seems in this house without any of them! And little Katie, poor child, she too has her sorrows and her wrongs, but God grant that she may never let the demon of revenge take possession of her heart! if she once does, farewell to happiness and peace of mind for ever."

The storm Katie had seen approaching now burst in full fury over the old Combe House. It seemed as though the elements were angry with it, but it stood tempest and howling blast bravely, although the doors and windows rattled and shook with the violence of its fury; the thunder rolled, and clapped with awful re-echoing peals in the old stone passages. A storm is at all times terribly grand, but in this lone deserted house, on the wild coast, it seemed doubly so. There was a weird, unearthly sound in the wailing shriek-

ing wind, like the spirits of the lost holding high revel. The masses of murky clouds made the day almost night, and the angry, dashing sea added to the terror of the scene. Jacqueline was a strong-minded woman, not given to start at sounds, ever so loud and strange, but there was something so ghastly being buried alone in the old Combe House, while the elements were exercising their fury, that she felt a cold, creeping kind of dread steal over her. All the legends she knew about the house came crowding to her mind. She never used to pay much attention to them, but now, somehow or other, they all came vividly before her. She wondered if it were true that the spirits of those who had worked much evil in their lives were doomed to revisit the scenes of their crime after death; if so, there had been horrors enough committed in that gaunt grey house to account for a legion of unquiet ghosts.

But no, she would not give way to such fancies, or, in her then excited state, there was no knowing what she might imagine; so Jacqueline, by an effort of will, conquered her fears, and went upstairs to the usual sitting-room. As she walked up, she was again seized with a nameless dread, a numb-

ness came in her limbs, and a cold crawling sensation stole about her, the air appeared to be full of whispering voices, and such power had these feelings gained, that she almost fancied some one was following her up the gloomy staircase, and that every moment a hand would be placed on her shoulder; so it was with a sigh of relief that she found herself in the room.

Her first act was to shut the door, and lock it, just as if that could keep out the imaginary horrors her brain had conjured up. She sank into a chair, pale and trembling: at that moment, she caught a glimpse of herself in a looking-glass, and could not repress a cry at the horrible figure she presented. Could that Medusa-like face be hers? pale and livid, with such an expression of terror, that she hid her face in her hands, to shut out the view of it.

She soon rallied, however; her natural good sense came to her aid. She knew there was some brandy in a cupboard in the room, so she rose, and poured out a wine glass full, and drank it off; after that, she felt better, and taking a seat by the window, sat down to contemplate the storm in all its grandeur, over the sea. As she watched it from the

old house, Paul and Katie were going through it all in a ramshackle old carriage.

It was very raw and cold, for the wind penetrated through the crazy windows of the shaky vehicle, filling it full of draughts. Katie and Paul occupied the front seat, while the man, who had called with the message, and his companion, had the opposite place. The pretended emissary of Captain Paul was anything but prepossessing, but his comrade was even worse, not that he was hideous, uncouth, brutal, and all the rest of the things that distinguish your conventional ruffians of modern novels; far from it, he was rather good-looking than otherwise, barring the expression of his eyes, which were disagreeably light, and cunning-looking; his features were rather too sharply defined, and his hair and eyebrows were of too pale a colour to look well.

Treachery was stamped on every feature of the other man's visage; his age might be thirty or thirty-five, it would be hard to determine to a year or so. Such was the outward appearance of the two men into whose hands Katie and Paul had fallen. Action and character did not belie them.

Horace Lee, or, as he now called himself,

James King, the fair man, had been born a gentleman, but had disgraced himself, and family, in every phase of his life. At school, he had been noted for his slyness, and cruelty to boys smaller than himself; was expelled from college for theft, had cheated at cards, and later on in life had been kicked out of his profession, (he chose the law,) for unfair practice. He was a born scoundrel, mean villainy was his nature; he would have sold his own mother to the gallows for a good round sum of money; he was a human vulture preying on his fellow men. Roland Weston had become acquainted with him years before, and had employed him in many little transactions, that would not bear the light of day.

The other man, Reuben Jacobs, was, as his name denoted, a Jew. He was of low parentage, held the position of clerk to Horace Lee, when he followed the law, and was now the ready partner of James King in any villainy. They always went together, Jacob generally playing jackal to the other's lion. They were just the men for Roland Weston. Reuben was more open-looking than his confederate, and that was the reason he presented himself at the old Combe

House; there was more the ring about him of a man whom Captain Paul was likely to send, and we have seen how well he succeeded.

Katie, however, bothered them; they had not reckoned on that little girl, with the clever, searching, sweet, brown eyes; she embarrassed them by her steady gaze. On, on rolled the carriage, bumping terrifically along the bad Cornish roads, not improved by the storm. It was not to Combe they went, but to a village, some ten miles in an opposite direction, where there was a small railway station. They all alighted, Paul and Katie had some refreshment given them, and were then put into a second class compartment with their conductors.

Paul asked when he should see his father, and was told he should see him in London; he had no suspicion, and was burning with impatience to get to him. Katie began to feel alarmed; she did not trust the men, young as she was, although she kept her doubts to herself. At any other time, the journey would have amused and interested her, unaccustomed as she was to travelling; but the novelty had now no excitement or charm, engrossed with her own fears for Paul's

safety. She took no heed of the scenery or stations they passed by, and was only aroused by having to change twice before the journey was over, and London reached.

It was early the next morning when they entered the metropolis, and drove to a tall, dingy-looking house, in a dismal street. There were some dirty yellow ragged blinds hanging awry at the windows, which were perfectly free from the suspicion of soap-sud, whilst the battered stone of the door-step seemed equally unacquainted with hearth-stone; the door, ornamented with a rusty knocker, appeared as innocent of paint, as any portion of wood from the ark would be, were it to be washed on to our shores in the present day.

At the one side of the entrance, a bell handle hung invitingly down, which you might pull as long as you pleased for your amusement, without producing the slightest effect on the inmates, for unluckily it was broken. It was scarcely light, but an organ-man was grinding away, in a persevering manner, as he directed the gambols of a melancholy monkey. Katie will never forget the feeling of desolation that struck her as she entered the house, nor the dread she

experienced when the door closed on them. She will never forget, as long as she lives, the wretched tune ground out of the barrel organ: whenever, in after times, she heard the same melody (or discord), the whole scene flashed across her memory.

They were led into an upstairs room, scantily furnished, with a bed, a table, two chairs, a strip of carpet, and a wash-hand-stand. An old woman, apparently very deaf, told Paul that that was his apartment, and mumbling something, told Katie to come with her. The girl would have refused, but she did not know how to do so, without evincing her suspicions; besides, Paul told her to go, and come back to him presently; so, fearing she knew not what, she followed the old woman to a room, very similar to the one assigned to Paul. Some coffee and bread-and-butter were placed before her, and she was then left alone.

"I will go back to Paul, now," she thought, rising, and going to the door. She found, to her surprise, that it was fastened, and all her efforts were unavailing to open it. She was a prisoner! All her worst fears were verified. "Ah! what were they going to do with Paul?" she tremblingly asked, no

thought of self occurring in Katie's breast; all her fears were on her companion's account, and her own safety was forgotten in her anxiety for Paul.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DÉBUTANTE.

"HARK to the shouts of applause! It is really a grand success; did you ever see such wonderful acting? and what a magnificent voice!"

"Hush, the curtain is going up again."

The foregoing words were spoken at the opera, and the occasion was the *debût* of Fräulein Erhart, or Miss Clara Cross, the *ci devant* governess. And a success it was; Her Majesty's had seldom witnessed a triumph like this, accustomed as its walls were to resound with the applause of thousands.

The opera in which Clara appeared, was one that suited well her highly dramatic genius, and rich, full voice. The character she had made her especial study, and it had another advantage, in never having before

been tried in England, so she could not be compared with former favourites. Muriel was there, accompanied by Lloyd; and Isobel had been persuaded to be present at the first appearance of her friend, although her black dress and sad face scarcely looked in keeping with the brilliant scene. She kept back, hidden by the curtains of the box, except when a louder burst of applause than usual caused her to lean forward. Muriel was enthusiastic to the highest degree, and felt as proud of the success as if she had been the artiste herself.

"Did I not say," she asked, "the first time I saw her, what a grand artiste she was, and now my opinion is echoed by the public?"

"My little woman," said her husband, looking with admiration on the sparkling face he loved so well, "you must not get conceited, although you were the first to discover the real value of the gem. I confess, I never anticipated anything like this. By Jove! she looks positively splendid. Who ever would think that magnificent creature was the dowdy old maid you introduced to me?"

"But she is not old, Lloyd," said Muriel, in a tone of remonstrance.

"So you told me before, darling, and I

believe it now, yet you must yourself admit, that it was hard to associate anything like youth with the Miss Cross I saw two years ago."

Yes, it was two years since Muriel had first heard Clara Cross sing. What changes had taken place since then! the wheel of fortune had gone round, bringing sorrow and sadness to some, and joy and gladness to others. Isobel, then, was a happy, petted wife; now, she was worse than widow. Worse than widow, indeed! for Herbert had never been heard of after his departure, and he was believed to have died of fever, which broke out on board the vessel in which he sailed. Poor Isobel was thoroughly broken down at this fatal news; fifteen months had elapsed since the time Sir Herbert was supposed to have died, and yet she still mourned unceasingly.

But she was not the only one cast down by fortune's wheel. Her rival was more miserable, if possible, than herself. The possession, for which she had schemed and sinned, had been hers but a short time; for, on the news of Sir Herbert's death, in default of a will, Roland had become Sir Roland Weston, and Pauline was, in her

turn, banished by her greatest enemy, and had returned with her children to the old Combe House, a broken-hearted woman. Sir Roland, strange to say, did not trouble her. Her brother Paul had disappeared, as well as his son, and Katie; nothing had been heard of the two latter since their mysterious departure sixteen months before.

Louie still lingered on, although it was very evident she was hastening home. The wretched Pauline suffered the most acute agony, as she watched her beloved, cherished child, slipping away from her hold. But, now, we must return to Miss Cross, after giving the retrospect of the past eighteen months.

Clara had found her true vocation, thanks to Muriel; she had already sung in Germany, and undertaken a short engagement in Paris, which had proved most successful; on this night, however, was her great triumph. A tap came at the Curtises' box, and two gentlemen entered—one, evidently an old friend, by Lloyd's affectionate greeting, and the other a stranger, introduced for the first time. The former was Max Wurther, the director of the opera at Berlin, and the latter, a gentleman of the name of Manners.

Max Wurther was a slight, slender, little, fair man, with a German face, a splendidly shaped head, and kind, clever, blue eyes. His companion, a tall, finely-formed man, about thirty-eight or forty, with rugged features, and overhanging eyebrows, was not good-looking, but had withal, a pleasant, reliable expression.

"Madame, I have taken the liberty of bringing my friend to present to you;" said Max Wurther, to Muriel. "He was most anxious to be introduced to the lady who first found out the genius of our friend, Fräulein Erhart, who has quite enchanted him."

"Yes, indeed," replied Mr. Manners, "I must congratulate, and thank you too, for the glorious benefit you have conferred on myself and society generally, in bringing out this great artiste."

"I have no right to be thanked," said Muriel. "Such genius as that could not fail to find some one to appreciate it."

"And yet my friend, Mr. Wurther, tells me, that she had been in the habit of singing before people, often, and no one had discovered her great talent, until you did."

"There you see, Madame, Monsieur Man-

ners will insist on giving you all the credit, and, indeed, I think he is right, so you had better make up your mind to be generally praised for your great discernment."

"Then," said Muriel, laughing, "in that case, I will do as you advise, and receive it with a good grace; but, really, is she not splendid?" she asked of the new comer.

"Splendid? she is divine! never, in my whole life, have I enjoyed an opera as I have this one. My friend, Max, has promised to present me to her, and he says that she is as true and noble as a woman, as she is glorious as an artiste."

Muriel could not help smiling at the evident admiration of Mr. Manners for the Fräulein Erhart, and wondered if he would have felt the same for the Clara Cross she was introduced to, two little years before.

Further conversation was stopped, for the idol of the night came in for the fourth and last act; it was her greatest scene, and the house was as still as death. She was an outraged wife, who had just found out her husband's perfidy, and was about to have a most awful revenge on him. Well, indeed, might the audience hold their breath, for it was no longer Fräulein Erhart, but the character

itself; never had they seen such marvellous acting, nor heard so passionate and thrilling a voice.

When the curtain fell, the spectators were silent for a moment, so startling had been the effect, and then arose thunders of rapturous applause. Clara was brought on again and again; now her career would indeed be brilliant. She had become famous in a night by the magic power of genius. But the artiste's eyes sought but one box, and tears came into them, tears of mingled gratification and sympathy, when she saw that little dark-robed figure, veiling for a night her broken heart, to be present at her triumph. Yes, that had given her more pleasure than all the noisy plaudits of the multitude. Max Wurther hurried away with his friend, Mr. Manners, to offer his congratulations to Clara, and the Curtises and Isobel went to their carriage, for they did not care to stay for the ballet. They drove to a quiet family hotel at the West End, where they were staying a few days.

"Isobel, darling, are you not glad you went?" said Rella. "Did you not see how pleased she looked, when you leant forward? she thought more of your being

there, depend upon it, than of all the rest put together."

"Yes, I'm glad I went, Rella, if you think my presence could give her any satisfaction; besides, it has done me good to see what a grand artiste she is. How proud you must feel, sister; but for your discernment, she might now have been a poor plodding governess. Who is that Mr. Manners, Rella? he seems quite attracted with Clara."

"I don't know, Issie, but I will ask Wurther to-morrow, when he comes, Do you know who he is, Lloyd?"

"No, little woman, but if he is Max's friend, you may depend he is worth knowing. How pleased the dear old fellow was to-night, and so excited."

"Whom do you mean, Lloyd?"

"Why Max, to be sure; but here we are at the hotel, and Issie must have some wine, for she looks as pale as a little ghost," and he gave his arm, and tenderly assisted his sister-in-law out of the carriage.

Isobel was very fortunate in having so kind and good a brother in her sister's husband. The next day brought not only Max Wurther, but Clara Cross also, to thank Isobel for coming to her *debût*, knowing how

repugnant it must have been to her feelings in her bitter grief. Two years had effected a marvellous change in Clara's outward appearance, and scarcely any one would have recognised in the brilliant, successful Prima Donna, the old-maidish governess; she no longer dressed in a juvenile old-fashioned style, the huge sausages were discarded, her dress of dark rich blue silk, with its costly lace, made her figure, which used to look gaunt, majestic; success and admiration had the effect of the magician's wand, and changed her from a plain prosy old lady, to a brilliant woman. Not that Clara was, or ever could be, handsome, her features were too large and decided, and her colouring too defective for that, but she had something grander than mere beauty in her face—the power of a noble soul and a firm intellect. Such was the Clara Cross of to-day.

Success had also softened her manners; they were more genial and sweet than in the days gone by. Her greeting of Muriel was warm and enthusiastic, but to Isobel she was delicate and tender, as, indeed, who would not have been? for the little pale face touched all hearts; there was such a world of suffering in the lovely eyes, and such a wearied

look generally in the whole appearance that made one's heart ache to see.

Clara stayed to luncheon, and Muriel asked her what she thought of her admirer, Mr. Manners.

"He seems a very nice man," she replied, "what little I have seen of him, but I cannot judge at present."

After some further conversation, she took her leave, and drove to her own home, a pretty little villa in St. John's Wood, whither we will follow her. Rose Cottage, the name of her abode, was situated in a charming garden, full of flowers, and resounded with the songs of birds, for the artiste loved music in all its forms. She had two sisters to live with her, who had been slaving away their lives in the drudgery of teaching, until their sister came like a good fairy to take them from their treadmill to live in ease and comfort with her. They were meek, gentle women, past their first youth, and very grateful for their kind sister's care.

When Clara arrived, a visitor was awaiting her—no other than Mr. Manners, who had come with some trivial message from Max, who, seeing the man's admiration for the singer, and knowing him to be a good, honest,

upright man, tolerably well endowed with this world's wealth, had taken pity on him, and let him have this further opportunity of seeing the Prima Donna, who had evidently won his heart, in her own home.

"Who knows," thought the kind-hearted man, "what may occur? I should like Clara Cross to be comfortably sheltered from the storms of life, in case a rival should spring up." For Max Wurther knew how fickle the public are, and the favourite of to-day may be cast aside to-morrow for a fresh face. Not that he anticipated anything like this for Clara for years to come.

After once breaking the ice, George Manners was a frequent visitor at Rose Cottage, and the day came when he declared his love, and asked for Clara's in return; but before he did so he related to her the story of his life, which, as it has to do materially with our story, we will give.

"I am now forty years old," he said, "and of course during that time I have many sad faults to confess. But before I ask the to me priceless boon of your love, I will give you a slight sketch of my life. I was the third son of a country doctor of good practice, who sent me to a public school, and afterwards to

Oxford, where I got into a bad set, and met the man who nearly wrecked my life. There were two brothers, Herbert and Roland" (Clara opened her ears at this); "they were the sons of a rich baronet. The elder, Herbert, was a good, open-hearted fellow, but unfortuately I liked Roland, the younger one, better. He was little more than a boy, but with as black a heart under his clever, nice address, as ever I met. This young fellow became enamoured of a girl about sixteen or seventeen in the town; her father was a teacher of music, or something of that sort, and she was as lovely a creature as you could possibly see.

"Well, as I said before, Roland fell in love with this girl, but she was too virtuous to listen to his proposals, until he offered marriage, when she consented to become his wife in secret, till he was of age and could acknowledge the marriage. Now this young villain had no intention of going through the legal ceremony, so he, with the assistance of a fellow as bad as himself, named Horace Lee, laid a plot to get this young girl into his power by means of a mock marriage. Now, unfortunately for their purpose, they could not do without the assistance of a third party, so they came to me, thinking, as I kept them

company, I was fit for any villainy. But the bare proposal opened my eyes to their character, and I determined to frustrate their designs. So I pretended to accede to their plans; but instead of a mock marriage it was a real one, for I procured a clergyman.

"After this I got into great disgrace with the authorities, and I was obliged to leave the university, and, all my prospects being blighted, went abroad, where I have remained ever since, till I had the good fortune to return to England and meet you. I traced the cause of my disgrace to Roland. No doubt, after the mock marriage, as he thought, he wanted to get me out of the way; and he succeeded, but unwittingly did me a great service, for it made a man of me, and, moreover, I have made a comfortable fortune, which I now lay at your feet."

"Stay," said Clara, pale and trembling, "was not the name of the brothers Weston?"

"Yes."

"Thank God! then perhaps after all Wilfred will have his rights. What was the woman's name?"

"Pauline."

"Then it is," almost screamed Clara; and, seeing the astonished expression on her ad-

mirer's face, she told him the story the reader already knows, and which Muriel had told her.

George Manners listened in wonder to the history.

"Thank God," he said, when Clara had finished, "I shall have an opportunity of doing justice at last. But, Clara, dearest Clara, you have not answered my request. I have never loved before. I know it is presumption on my part, a plain, middle-aged man, to aspire to such a blessing as your love, but all that mortal man can do to make your life happy shall be my unceasing endeavour, if you will accept me."

"Listen, then, George," said Clara, calling him for the first time by his Christian name, and thrilling him with joy by so doing. "I do love you, and I am not ashamed to own it; but I am going to ask you to do something for me to put your love to a severe test. I have a presentiment that Herbert Weston is not dead. No one knows for certain if he even sailed in the vessel that was lost. Now, if you will devote six months to the task of discovering some certain clue as to whether he is alive or dead, there is my hand whenever you claim it."

"Clara, I honour you more and more for your noble gratitude. I will do what you desire, and then this dear hand will be mine for ever!"

CHAPTER XXI.

PASSING AWAY.

THE old Combe House again, but oh, how different! No longer merry peals of laughter from light-hearted youth is heard—all mirth is hushed and silent. The windows of the room overlooking the sea are open, and the bright sun shines and sparkles in the blue sea beneath, making nature gay and buoyant, but she cannot bring joy to the sorrow-stricken hearts in that room.

Louie, sweet Louie, is dying, propped up in an old-fashioned chair by the window. The fair girl looks more like a broken lily than anything else. The sun shines on her yellow hair, turning it into a golden auriole, and her wistful blue eyes have the far-off look we see in those so soon to be transplanted. Yes, Louie will soon be where no more sorrow

can touch her, and where she will find balm for her broken heart. By her side stands Pauline, no longer the radiant woman, peerless in her glorious beauty, but a worn, grief-stricken mother, who watches with tearless agony her darling passing away. Revenge has recoiled on her own head with terrific force, for the child she made her idol will, in a few short hours, be hers no longer.

Lola, with bowed head and clasped hands, stands at the further end of the room, mourning, with a grief that can never be assuaged, over her fatal work. Jacqueline, older and more sorrowful than when we saw her last, is squeezing some lemon juice into a cup, making a drink for the dying girl, who is silently watching the fleecy clouds in the blue sky. At last she breaks the mournful silence.

"Lola, my poor sister, come here to me." The girl obeys the request, and sobs that seem to rend her very soul burst from her lips. "Hush, hush, Lola, you must not give way like this. I want you to cease grieving for me in this way, my darling. I want you to see that it is God's will—you were but the instrument in His hands. It needed this great lesson, Lola, to make me turn to Him. Had all gone smoothly, I should have been so

happy that I should most likely have gone on living without Him; but this trouble has made me turn to Him for comfort, and I have received it. He has healed my bruised heart, Lola, and, seeing what a weak, feeble little thing I am, He is taking me to Himself out of all temptation. Believe me, sister, dear, loved sister, it is better so. We shall only be parted for a little while; turn to our Father in Heaven for comfort and guidance, and you will feel peace. Oh, Lola, my twin sister, ever dear, I will watch over you, if spirits are permitted, until you come to me. Promise, Lola, you will come."

"Louie, Louie," sobbed the miserable girl, "have pity on me. Your words kill me. What a wretch I have been! I have robbed you of life and love, and instead of reproaches you give me love and gentleness. Oh! my sister, would that God would take me and let you live! you who are an angel while I am a monster! an unnatural wretch, not fit to encumber the earth! No, there can never be forgiveness for such as I!"

"Lola, my poor Lola, cease to talk like that. There is no sin, however great, but the blood of the Saviour can wash away. I first learnt that from dear little Katie. God watch

over her, wherever she may be! I should like to have seen her, and Paul, before I went; but tell them, when you see them, for something tells me you will before long, that I thought of them before I went, and that they must not fret, for our parting will not be for long. We shall meet where all tears are wiped away, and sin and sorrow do not exist. Lola, do not despair; think how happy I am going to be. But, sister, I shall wait for you."

The wretched Lola could not restrain the violence of her grief, and, seeing that it distressed her sister, rushed from the room.

"Mother!"

The voice was very sweet and low.

"My cherished child, I am here."

"Be kind to Lola when I am gone. Remember she is your daughter, and my twin sister. Ah, mother, mother," wailed the girl, "it is not so much her fault. You gave me all your love, to the exclusion of her; and then, mother, she loved him too. Besides, have we not been to blame in many things? Think of that poor Lady Weston and her little boy? I heard all the sad history, and it preyed on me as much as any-

thing—yes, almost as much as that other. Think of her sufferings!"

Pauline writhed at Louie's words; everything was true, and cut her heart like a knife. Isobel, whom she had hated for stealing away her husband's heart, as she thought, but more for gaining the love of the man she had once so madly loved, and now as madly hated, was indeed avenged; Isobel's sufferings were great no doubt, but what were they compared with hers; she had lost all for which she had schemed, and now she was about to lose the dearest of all, the child for whom she would have shed her heart's blood drop by drop, and through her own fault, too. Oh! what agony did not the guilty woman suffer; her strong, undisciplined will was crushed, her heart broken; true, she had one child left, but the very thought of her filled her with horror—had she not been the executioner of her darling?

"Mother, you do not speak," said the dying girl, clasping her arms round the unhappy woman's neck, as she knelt by her chair; "promise, mother, to give Lola my place in your heart."

"No, no, that can never be, my life will be finished when you go; day for me will close,

and the rest of my existence will be one perfect night. But for your sweet sake I will try to forgive her, and think of her as your sister. Oh! Louie, idol of my heart, you do not know what a fearful task you have set me; but I will try to forget that her cruel hand robbed me of what was dearer than light and life, my child."

"Mother!" and the sweet voice was almost stern; "you are unjust. Was it not rather your fault in the first instance, for lavishing on me the whole of your love? perhaps, had it been the other way, and Lola been the favourite, I should have done the same. From a little child she saw the difference between your feelings for us, and grew up smarting under the injustice done her. Then, were you not yourself fostering feelings of revenge? Was Lola so much to blame, then, after all, in following your example? Ah! pardon me, poor mother, if I wound you, but I want you to do justice to poor Lola when I am gone. Remember, she is my twin-sister, what tie can be stronger than that? and I love her, oh! so dearly, poor unhappy Lola. Aunt Jaqueline, you will take care of mamma when I am gone, I know, as you have always done, but be kind to Lola, remember I leave her as a legacy, the most

precious one to you; she is unhappy, and I fear will remain so; all her life has been dreary, while mine has been replete with love. What had she done that almost from her birth she should be deprived of that love that has made my life so bright?"

Jacqueline started as the girl called her aunt, and Louie noticed it.

"Ah! you did not know that I knew our relationship, your good unselfish relation to us; but I have learnt the secret some time. I guessed something of it, and mamma told me you were her sister when I asked her. I am proud of you, aunt; and it is because you have been so true and noble all your life, that I leave my sister to your care, watch over and guard her as you have mamma. You can understand how I love Lola, for has not your whole life been a proof of what a sister's love can be? God bless you, aunt Jacqueline, I shall die happy, knowing that Lola will have a friend in you."

"She shall, Louie," said Jacqueline solemnly, "I will do my best to obey your wishes while I live."

"Thank you," replied the dying girl, and her voice was very weak. For some minutes she did not speak, and lay back exhausted.

"Mother," and her voice had a strange thrill, "where is Lola? it's getting dark, I cannot see you."

Jacqueline hastened to find the girl.

"Come quick," she said; "Louie is dying, and asking for you."

Lola rose from her knees by the side of her bed, where she had escaped in her agony of grief, and followed Jacqueline. Although half an hour had scarcely elapsed since she left that room, an awful change had taken place in her sister. Death was in her face, his dread seal was impressed on her childish features, and the dark, damp dews glistened on her white forehead.

"Louie, speak to me," moaned the girl, throwing herself at her sister's feet, in the abandonment of her grief; "one word, or I shall die."

Her voice called her back from the portals of the grave.

"Lola, sister, come, mother, your promise; Lola, Gustave, happy."

The head fell, and Louie, the bright, pure Louie, was no more; one more bright angel in paradise, one more frail tenement on earth broken!

Over the terrible agony of Pauline and

Lola we draw a veil. Louie was buried in the church-yard at Combe, within sound of the ever-murmuring sea, and a white marble shaft, with the simple inscription :—

LOUIE,

AGED 19.

"Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God,"—

marked the place where the fair case that had held the bright soul a prisoner lay. For weeks after the death of her favourite daughter, Pauline lay between life and death, and during her ravings, Lola learnt the whole history of her mother, which she had been so anxious to know in the days gone by; but, alas, nothing could ever again interest her now. As she looked forward, life seemed more than she could bear; only nineteen, she might be doomed to linger on perhaps for half a century. Oh! what punishment could equal that, so young and yet to be burdened with such a load of remorse? Her sin had found her out; how she envied her sister in her peaceful grave by the sea. Life was so dreary and grey in the future for her, not one gleam of sunshine could she see, however distant; married to a man who hated her for her

treachery, and parted for ever by that sister's grave, that her undisciplined, unholy passion had helped to dig. What lot could be more sad than hers? She watched by her mother's bed-side, and saw her sufferings, and heard her in the paroxysms of delirium wildly calling for the child whom she would never see more in this world. A feeling of compassionate love usurped the place of the hatred she had felt for her mother, and she watched over her with tender care. "I will strive," thought the wretched girl, "to make some atonement for my wickedness by my devotion to her." Jacqueline was quite broken down by the series of trials, so the nursing devolved on Lola, and took her a little out of her miserable self, but yet remorse had plenty of time to rack her in the lonely night watches beside her mother's bed. As she listened to the mournful murmurings of the sea, and thought of that lonely grave to which she had consigned her fair young sister, reason almost tottered on its throne; but with the morning came hard work to banish for a time from her mind the terrors of the night, and thus the days lagged slowly on. While Pauline lay between life and death, and Jacqueline prostrate. It was a sad life for one so young, but youth seemed a

thing of the past for the unhappy Lola; suffering had done the work of years. Though only nineteen, there was a sad expression that would never leave her face again while life itself lasted—joy, happiness, light, and love lay buried for ever in the grave of her twin sister.

CHAPTER XXII.

HAUNTED.

WE must now go back eighteen months. We left Roland Weston prosecuting his search after Pauline, and her brother Paul in the midst of his plans. When they were almost matured, and he was about to come down on his enemies, he read in the papers the *dénouement* at Weston Park; it came on him like a thunder-clap, and upset all his calculations. He had quite left out of the reckoning this bold *coup* of Pauline; she had forestalled him, and instead of his being the victor she had again outwitted him. He gnashed his teeth with rage, but there was no help for it, so he remained dead to the world a little longer, to see how things might turn out, but in the meantime he devoted all his energies to get young Paul into his power; how well he

succeeded the reader already knows, but fortune had other luck in store for him. The announcement of Herbert's supposed death again gave him the trump-card, and he came forward to the surprise of all who long ago fancied him dead, and succeeded to the title and estates of his brother. How he gloated over the rage and disappointment Pauline would feel; what then was his surprise when she gave up everything quite calmly and went back to the old Combe House? The truth was, that her proud heart was broken, and she no longer cared for wealth and power, when she saw the idol of her heart was dying; so she gave up all, only stipulating for a certain allowance, and went away as quietly as she had come, taking a girl from the village, to whom Louie had been attached, to wait upon her.

Sir Roland Weston, after all his ambition, was at length gratified, and his revenge complete. Herbert, the brother he had envied and hated, in a watery grave. Isobel, the woman who had scorned his love, disgraced; her child made a bastard. Pauline, crushed under the weight of her grief; and Paul's son in his power, surely he had nothing to wish for now; but, alas! for the gratification of

human nature. He was not happy; of late a strange malady had seized him, he was haunted continually by the form of a woman he had deceived, and left to starve. It was only one among many; but, somehow or other, the memory of Ellie Jones never let him rest. She had committed suicide he believed, and his conscience conjured her up, with the water dripping from her, and the foul river mud clinging to her brown hair, the hair he used to caress. She always presented herself to his mind's eye as he thought he had seen her last, when he read of a woman and child being found drowned in the river, and by a strange fascination he could not account for, was forced to go and see if it was the woman he had driven to desperation. Well he remembered the low public-house down by the river-side; the shed where the horrible object lay battered and swollen out of all semblance of humanity. But the brown hair was the same; yes, he felt sure the unfortunate gone to her rest was Ellie and her child, his child. At the time it had made a most unpleasant impression on him, and for several days he could not shake it off; but now, after all these years in the midst of his triumph, that dead woman came to haunt

him as he had seen her last; he would wake in the night, and fancy he heard the water dropping on the floor as he heard it in the shed, from her clothing. The slightest things would take the form to his diseased imagination of a drowned woman, and he got so morbid on this point, that it amounted to monomania. In the midst of the wildest revels into which he would plunge, in the hope of escaping from himself, the spectre would appear alone in the lonely hours of the night; the loathsome object would stand by his bed with a menacing look on her bruised and distorted features; the glassy eyes would seem to glare on him, and reproach him for her destruction.

There was no doubt that the solitary confinement in the cave had unsettled his reason, which now took this peculiar form. Nemesis, a stern Nemesis, had overtaken him, for no torture man could have inflicted was like this. Ellie was sleeping calmly in her grave in the London churchyard, and yet the man who had betrayed her, was haunted by a frightful figure, conjured up by his guilty soul. His sin had indeed turned into a whip wherewith to scourge him: sleeping or waking, alone in solitude or in the midst of

his fellow men, his punishment was by; his manner became so strange that people shunned him, and he got the sobriquet of the "Mad Baronet," yet he was perfectly sane except on this one point. But, alas, this dreadful ghost did not make him less revengeful.

Paul was in his power; he had separated him from his father. The Captain had gone to his old enemy and prayed him to give up his boy, but Sir Roland had laughed equally at his threat and prayer.

"You dare not kill me," he said, "for by so doing, you would condemn your son to a lingering death, for no one knows his prison but myself. You would in that case be his murderer; as to your prayers, I laugh at them. No, no, remember the cave and the sea, the hateful sea. Damn it! I hear it now!" and the miserable man's voice rose to a scream.

Captain Paul saw he had to do with a man who was not quite sane, so he gave up asking, and left him, to prosecute his hopeless search after his son; but he too disappeared silently.

Now Katie, who was separated from Paul, was not unkindly treated, but she was kept

a prisoner, and one morning was taken on board a boat at London Bridge, and was shipped to Belgium under the skipper's charge; there she was met by a woman. It was a kind of school where Katie was taken to, and she would not have been unhappy if it had not been for the separation from Paul, and uncertainty as to his fate.

About the time of Louie's death, Sir Roland had remembered the existence of this little girl, and by one of those unaccountable freaks, which persons not quite sane are subject to, determined to have this child at Weston Park; so Katie was brought there. Little did he think as he gazed in the face of the girl, and started at the likeness to the woman he had so cruelly wronged, that it was his own child who stood before him, and who would help to bring retribution on him. Katie had found out enough by chance words let fall, that Sir Roland for some reason or other was Paul's enemy, and the brave girl determined to do all in her power to save him.

Sir Roland soon got very much attached to the young girl, and made up his mind to adopt her. Katie had not been many hours an inmate of Weston Park, before she found

out Sir Roland's affliction. About three weeks after Katie's arrival there, Sir Roland was sitting in the library, a large gloomy apartment. It was getting dusk, and the shadows were very dark in the room. Sir Roland was sitting, thinking, when he heard the dripping noise he had so learnt to dread, he turned his head to the spot from whence the sound proceeded, and there stood a female figure.

There was no deception of the imagination, there stood in the shadow a woman's form; drops of water fell slowly on to the oaken floor with a hollow, monotonous sound, one arm was raised in menace towards the horror-stricken man. He strove to speak, but his tongue clave to his mouth. At last, by a strong effort, he asked,

"What do you want? why do you haunt me like this?"

His voice was so hoarse that he started himself at the sound of it.

"Man of sin," replied the spectre, in a sepulchral voice, "why do you continue to persecute the innocent? I will never cease haunting you till you make retribution for what you have done; even now your sins are calling for retribution on you."

The figure disappeared in the gloom, and Sir Roland fell on the floor in a fainting fit. It was some time before he recovered sufficiently to leave the room.

"It must be fancy," he said, "I will try change of scene. I will go away to Paris, gay, bright Paris; yet to get there I shall have to cross the sea, the hateful sea. No, no, I cannot do it, I must remain here, and be driven mad. But where is Katie? the dreadful thing will not come in her presence. Shall I tell her? no, perhaps if I did, she would shrink away in fear from such a haunted wretch as I am."

Had Sir Roland not been such a slave to an evil conscience, and examined closely into the mysterious apparition, he might have found it a denizen of the globe after all, but "Conscience makes cowards of us all." Thus Sir Roland never thought for one moment of doubting the supernatural character of his visitant. He went to the drawing-room, and in a few moments Katie entered, her long dark hair not as usual floating over her shoulders, but smoothly done in a large coil, and with the appearance of having been very recently washed, for it was not quite dry now. When she saw Sir Roland, she

turned slightly pale, he was not a usual visitor in that room, but his gracious manner soon dispelled the girl's fear, if she had any, and she sat down and played to him according to his request.

But this night everything seemed combined to deepen Sir Roland's fit of melancholy. Katie played all the doleful and weird music she could think of: the ghost melody in the "Corsican Brothers," and the most unearthly *morceaux* from "Der Freyschütz," and "Robert le Diable," so even she, instead of diminishing the power of superstition to which Sir Roland had become a prey, increased it.

After this the haunted man was favoured by frequent visits from the spectre, who always urged the necessity of repentance and restitution. At last it got bold, and demanded to know where Paul Noir was. Very singular for a spirit to ask such questions, and had not the once clear, clever brain of Sir Roland become clouded and perfectly warped, he would never have become such a dupe; but, being really now next door to a madman, he satisfied the inquisitive ghost, who troubled herself so much about other people's business that she could not sleep quietly.

This information had a most startling effect, for in less than forty-eight hours after Paul, very pale and delicate-looking, was on his way to the old Combe House, in company with Jacqueline.

Now, of course, the reader has divined that Katie was the ghost with the enquiring turn of mind, but it is necessary to give some little explanation as to how she came to think of the experiment. As soon as she had arrived at Weston Park, she had written to Combe House, and received in return a long letter from Lola, explaining all the startling events that had taken place during her absence, and also giving an account of the peculiar turn of Sir Roland's mind, and what an enemy he had been to them all. She urged Katie to find out where young Paul was, and, in further correspondence it was Lola, clever and subtle, who suggested the part of the ghost to Katie, which the brave child had carried out, not without quaking and fear at times, but with what success we have seen.

Having obtained all the information from the conscience-ridden man, she telegraphed to Lola, and Jacqueline left at once for London. Arrived in the metropolis, she drove to Scotland Yard, told them that a youth was con-

fined in a certain house in Westminster, the name of which she gave, away from his friends, and asked assistance from the police. The house was known to belong to a suspicious character, so they granted her request, and took the proprietor, no other but Reuben Jacobs, by surprise. He was in mortal dread, his deeds not being able to bear inspection from the eyes of the myrmidons of the law, was forced to confess that Paul was detained under his roof, and lead them to his place of concealment. He tried hard for them to let him release the boy without disclosing the secret of his prison, but they would not allow it, so he was obliged to take one of the officers, leaving the other with Jacqueline in the front room.

Reuben Jacobs led the way down into the cellar. Behind a heap of rubbish, which he pushed aside, there was a door which opened into a large room, not uncomfortably furnished. Here it was, buried alive, as it were, that Paul was hidden away. The light of day could never penetrate this place; but there was a lamp, and the boy seemed pretty well supplied with books, and little creature comforts were not wanting in this subterranean chamber.

"Oh! is this the reason, Mr. Jacobs, you have been able to baffle us so long?" said the officer, looking at the room with a scrutinizing glance; "but it won't be of much use in future. I think you'd better block it up now, the gaff's blown. And now come along, sir,"—to Paul. "I dare say you won't be sorry to be restored to liberty."

At the word the young man sprang up, with a cry of joy, and followed the officer up stairs to the parlour, where he was locked in the arms of Jacqueline. Mr. Jacobs did not seem to enjoy this little exhibition of feeling, and the officer stood by in silence. However, in a few moments they were all seated in the cab, leaving Reuben Jacobs a prey to any but pleasurable emotions. Not only did he fear the anger of his confederate at the escape of their prey, but the last words of the officer were not comforting, although they were simple enough to the uninitiated—only,

"I shall want you in a day or so—I suppose you'll be at home when I call?"

To Reuben those words meant prison, perhaps transportation. He felt there was no escape. He knew he was as much a prisoner in reality as though the walls of Newgate enclosed him. He was under the surveillance of

the police, and there was not an action of his that was not known to them. No wonder, then, he trembled and turned pale.

The air, after his close confinement, had so strong an effect on Paul that Jacqueline was forced to rest that night in London; but the early morning light saw them on their way to the old Combe House. During their journey, as they had a *coupé* to themselves, Paul related some of the particulars of his captivity.

After he was separated from Katie, he had been removed to a large house somewhere in the country, where he was allowed to walk about in the garden, which was surrounded by a very high wall. It was a desolate place, seemingly untenanted except by an old woman and a man who looked after him. However, he was not allowed to remain there long, but was taken to an old house in London, near the docks, and afterwards to the room where Jacqueline had found him.

Paul had much to learn. The death of Louie, the disappearance of his father, and last, and most extraordinary of all, Katie's residence at Weston Park, and her clever plan by which he was now at liberty. The news of his sweet cousin's death affected him greatly, for he, like Katie, had loved her dearly, so it

was with sad heart he arrived, as the shades of night were falling, at the old Combe House, where he had spent so many happy days. Now, alas! all was gloom; the shadow of death had closed over it, and joy would never again return to its grey walls.

The meeting between himself and his aunt and remaining cousin was very affecting. He came back to them as it were from the grave, while the great alteration in Pauline, just recovering from the dangerous illness that had attacked her after Louie's death, and the inexpressible sadness in the face of Lola was almost too much for Paul in his weak state. Another surprise also awaited him in the relationship of Jacqueline, which Pauline explained to him. The disappearance of his father did not cause him as much anxiety as might have been expected, for he felt sure that he would return.

Paul had altered during his absence. He was now a tall stripling between nineteen and twenty. He retained the same gentle, almost womanly face of his childhood, a very refined one, perhaps a little too much of the visionary and dreamer in it, but withal a very winning face, in its sad, sweet expression. His lameness was still perceptible, as indeed it would

be to the end of his days, although much less so than in his youth. He looked pallid and ill, but that was easily to be accounted for by his long imprisonment and uncertainty as to the fate of his family. Pauline, Jacqueline, Paul, and Lola, had a long conversation the day after his arrival, and it was decided that he should remain perfectly quiet until some news was heard of his father, before taking any steps towards calling Sir Roland Weston to account.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HAPPY BRIDEGROOM.

THE London season is again at its height. Rotten Row is full of equestrians; the Lady's Mile is gay with its brilliant equipages, dashing horses, and pretty faces. Two gentlemen are strolling down, but so engrossed in their conversation, that many a charming face smiling recognition is unseen.

"So, Laton, it's all true," said the elder of the two, a man about forty; "by Jove, it sounds like a page in a romance, and, after all, old fellow, I don't understand it; just tell me, will you, and see if my matter-of-fact pate can take in the marvellous details. The Erhart married to a man named Manners, don't you say, and Herbert Weston not dead after all; but what is the connection between the two events?"

"Everything, my dear fellow; it appears that the Erhart was under some obligation to Lady Weston and her sister, Mrs. Curtise, you know, *la belle* Curtise; well, she was most anxious when all that trouble fell on them. You remember another wife cropping up, and ousting Lady Weston and her son out of the property; well, the Fräulein was dreadfully cut up, and all that sort of thing; but was unable to do anything, till chance threw this Manners in her way; he fell in love, and made her his father confessor, telling her all his little peccadilloes, among others some strange story about a mock marriage, at which he assisted at College, and which he made into a real one, unknown to the happy bridegroom, who was playing the principal parts in their charming little farce; well, of course, the end came, the Benedict got tired of his *rôle*, told the lady after a few months that the marriage was a sham, and bade her good morning. She, filled with rage and disappointment, vowed to have revenge, threw herself in the way of the elder brother of her faithless swain, and persuaded him to marry her, which he, being very much in love, and not knowing about the little episode in which his younger brother had figured so honourably, did so, but it was a very secret

affair, for the father was alive, and might have cut up rough at his heir marrying a girl so much beneath him. They lived a kind of love in a cottage life for a year or so, and two little birds came to increase their domestic happiness, which, according to all accounts, they did not. Madame did not improve on acquaintance, and Monsieur found he had made a great mistake; however, it was too late to rectify it; what could not be cured, must be endured. So things went from bad to worse, the young fellow became his own master; but, alas! for the ambition of Madame, he would not acknowledge his marriage. Madame became furious, found her lord and master was hopelessly in love with another woman, and then, in a delightful jealous frame of mind, hit on as devilish a little plot to be revenged on her husband number two as you ever heard related. She disappeared with her two daughters, gave out that they had been drowned, sent proofs of their demise with her own fair hands to him, and then, under another name, in a little dull French town, sat down to watch her bereaved lord's future conduct. A year after he married the woman he really loved, and was as happy as could be; when, all of a sudden, Madame starts up with her

two girls. The husband, broken-hearted, goes abroad, and wife number two returns to her relations, with her boy, a broken-hearted woman; then comes to wife number one, in the midst of her triumph, the news of her husband's death, and she in her turn is obliged to give way to the brother, the hero of the little drama of her youth, and, of course, her greatest enemy. Now George Manners tells this to the Fräulein, and she recognises the parties as her friends, whom she is under everlasting obligations to, etc.; but she has a presentiment (women are always having those sort of things) that Sir Herbert is not dead, so consents to marry her lover, on condition he devote six months to finding out authentic information as to whether he really did die. The lover accedes to the conditions, and sets off on his search. Now comes the romantic *dénouement*, Manners gets a clue, follows it up, finds the missing man did not sail by the ill-fated vessel in which he was supposed to have met his fate, finds him just recovering from a brain fever, tells him the glorious news, brings him home in triumph to the delight of wife number two, who turns out to be the true wife. After all a charming little drama, is it not? and we may expect to hear more in a day or

so, for the happy family went down yesterday to confront the wicked brother, armed at all points and bristling all over with proofs; but, by Jove, there is Lady Diana bowing to you, and I declare the Rosemere feature is getting decidedly red at your inattention. How I pity that poor devil of a banker, Lysle, as he calls himself; but Bodgers is his proper cognomen. Ah! ah! Lady Diana Bodgers sounds pretty, does it not?"

"What a fellow you are!" replied his friend. "But you were saying you pitied him. What a vulgar old brute! he deserves all he gets. Look how abominably he has behaved to his son, giving him fifteen hundred a year, and saying that is all he is to expect from him, after bringing him up with the idea he would have about twenty thousand."

"Well I don't see much to pity Lysle for. All his debts paid and fifteen hundred a year —I only wish that I had that besides my pay; by Jove! I should be as jolly as a sand-boy. But now, to explain why I pity the brave banker, the lovely Lady Diana has a temper of her own. Not only that, she is, if all accounts are true, a shining light among the very low church party, fond of tea-meetings and muffin-worries, and entertainments of that

lively description; so she, having a tender regard for that infinitesimal atom, the banker's soul, drags him away from his dessert to these highly edifying and instructive entertainments, where he has to swallow any amount of marvellous stories about missionaries. Why Jonah and the whale is nothing to the tales these fellows tell, for instead of the whale swallowing Jonah, they make Jonah swallow the whale. And then the jolly little tracts that he has, easy of digestion no doubt, but hardly fit for his mature years, I should think. Only fancy, when I called there the other day, and went into his private room to have a smoke—for Lady Di objects to the fragrant weed, among other weaknesses, and confines it to that private sanctum of her lord—I found a pile of sweet, instructive little books on the table, about 'Harry, the naughty boy who threw stones,' and 'Sukey, who cruelly tried to poke out the cat's eye!' Now I confess that, although we are children of a larger growth, I think something a little stronger might be given to the elderly child. But, joking apart, what bosh it is giving grown-up men ridiculous stories that an intelligent child of five would laugh at. I am sure I would not live a week with a woman like

that, although she were Lady Diana, with all the bygone wealth of the Rosemeres instead of their noses. By Jove, what a proboscis it is! But she does not look very happy, does she, although she has managed to hook that great fish, the banker? By the bye, talking of Lysle, have you noticed how cynical he has grown, and wasn't there something about his being in love with some one?"

"Yes, he was engaged, so it is said, to one of that false wife's daughters, and went down to marry her; but there was some disappointment or other, and he went abroad. He has only come back a few weeks since, and has grown, as you say, awfully cynical. I don't think he liked his father giving him a new mamma. Well, I don't wonder at that, such a specimen as it is too, and they do say that they don't hit it at all. It was supposed at one time that Lady Diana was to have been his wife, and that she never forgave him throwing her over. Anyhow Lysle is scarcely ever there, and I understand he is going to India. But about this extraordinary history, when do you think we shall hear the rest of the story? I suppose that Lady Weston, who has been under a cloud, will come out brighter than ever. Well I am very glad, for

a more charming little woman does not exist than she is. They are a first-rate family those Lawsons. See what a splendid woman Mrs. Curtise is. The major, her brother, is no end of a jolly fellow. But come and dine with me, old fellow. I can give you a first-rate glass of Burgundy, that has been down in my cellar in Albemarle Street ever since I went to India, eleven years ago."

"All right. But I wonder, Paulton, you never get married?"

"Ah! my dear fellow, we all have our little mysteries, and perhaps I have mine," sighed the gentleman addressed as Paulton. "I shall never marry, so you may always be certain of a bachelor welcome at my crib, seven sharp."

And with these words the two men parted.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SUNSHINE.

THREE years have passed and gone; it is summer again at Weston Park, the sunset hour. Isobel is on the terrace watching the gambols of her son, now a fine boy of ten, with his little Cousin Letty; happiness deep is in her sweet face. She has gone through the fire of affliction, and come forth gold purified. While she is watching the children Muriel joins her.

"Well, Issie, how occupied you seem with those little ones. But come, dear, I want you to tell me all the particulars of the wonderful story; for although your letters from Italy were very charming, they did not give me the information I wished for, and only think, sister mine, we have been parted nearly three years. Do you know I think Herbert very much improved? He was

always a dear old fellow, but now he is perfectly charming, and I could almost find it in my heart to envy you; but what nonsense I am talking, when I would not change my Lloyd for any one in the world—but now for the story."

"Well, dear, I don't know that I have much to tell you that you have not heard before, but as you desire, I will relate the particulars. You know that when George Manners found Herbert living, though a perfect wreck from the effects of a brain fever, brought on with fretting, poor fellow, and accompanied him home, we both came down to Weston Park to confront those who tried to destroy our happiness—all that you know. Well, Roland Weston, at the sight of the brother he had so cruelly wronged, fell down like a dead man. He soon recovered; but alas, when he found he had been really married to that unfortunate woman, his brain that had been tottering gave way, and he became for the time raving mad.

"It was very awful to hear him talking of the crimes he had committed. He seemed haunted by the memory of a woman he had deceived, and driven to commit suicide. She had a child too, and in his most agonized fits he

would pray to be kept from her reproachful eyes. In one of these paroxysms he mentioned her name, and Katie, who was nursing him—indeed, the child was the only being who had any power over him—recognised her mother's name, and it turned out that she was his daughter, the child of the woman he had so cruelly wronged. The poor thing was dead, but not in the way he thought: she had simply died of a broken heart, leaving her child to the care of a brother.

"Poor little Katie, her life had been very sad, I believe, until Paul, now the brother of Roland's real wife, went to lodge with his son in the house of these relations of Katie, and being a witness to the child's ill-treatment at the hands of her uncle's wife, a dreadful virago, took the child away then and there; but, unfortunately, Roland never knew this, but continued to be haunted by the spectre of his crime until his death, three days after his first losing his reason.

"Over that death-bed let us draw a veil; it was too dreadful to think of. He died as he had lived, a mystery. All our troubles had been through him, and although one should never speak ill of the dead, I am obliged to recount some of his evil deeds to

make you understand the story, and prevent all the blame falling on those who do not deserve it. It appears that Roland always hated and envied Herbert for being the heir, but he managed to conceal his feelings under a semblance of brotherly affection. He was also very profligate, although no one imagined it. He saw this Pauline Noir when he was at college; he was little else than a boy, and she was scarcely sixteen.

"She loved with all her heart, poor child, and thought him everything that was good and noble. There was a mock marriage as he thought, but in reality a real one, and after a few months he turned the girl off, telling her it was only a farce, that ceremony. Poor young thing, it turned all her love into blackest hate. Can you wonder that she gave herself up to revenge? but this was not all the wrongs to her and hers. This brother Paul, some three or four years her senior, was an impetuous, warm-hearted fellow, who loved his sister dearly, to him she confessed her secret marriage, unknown to Roland; and when he treated the girl so shamefully, the brother went to him, and threatened unless he really married his sister, he would publish to the world his iniquity.

"This was a thing Roland would not have had for the world; it would have ruined his character for morality with his father, who was very strict about such things; so he got a vile wretch, a companion of his in secret, named Horace Lee, to make the acquaintance of young Noir. This creature, with some companions, pretending to be friends, led him to play, and one night Lee lent him some money to pay what he had lost; it was a cheque. The next day, when it was presented at the bank, it was discovered to be a forgery.

"Paul Noir was taken up, and these monsters gave false evidence, and the poor young man was condemned to transportation for ten years. But he managed to escape, and joined a lot of desperate fellows, who used to carry on smuggling. They were the terror of excisemen, until free trade did away with their employment, and then "La Vengeance," as their ship was called, disappeared for some time, until the American war, when a celebrated blockade runner of that name ran the most wonderful risks. The name of the captain was Paul—no other than our old friend Noir. He had sworn to be revenged on Roland, but of that after.

"Pauline, her heart a perfect prey to all the evil passions, saw Herbert, captivated him, and married him—that was the first instalment, poor girl, of the revenge on Roland. Well, of course they were very miserable, she not caring at all for her husband, and he finding out the state of her feelings. They quarrelled dreadfully, and at last separated.

"About this time Herbert and Roland both met me at my first ball. Roland offered me his hand, but I refused him. I saw Herbert liked me, and I had surrendered my heart to him. I wondered why he never confessed his love, and asked for my hand; and as year after year passed without his speaking, although he was my constant shadow, I began to feel indignant. But suddenly he proposed, told me the sad story of his marriage, and how death had at last released him.

"We waited a year, and than how happy we were I need not tell you, until that fatal blow. However, all's well that ends well. But for all that, darling, it was a sad and dreary time."

"Yes, Isobel, sad and dreary indeed. But

you have not told me what has become of the unfortunate wife of Roland?"

"She has gone back to the little French town to live, of course. Herbert settled a comfortable income on her, but she is quite an altered woman, I believe. But here come Paul and Katie. I suppose, Rella, it will not be long before I shall lose the dear girl—but I must not be selfish, for I am sure Paul adores her, and will make her an excellent husband, while his father tries all he can to spoil her. How beautiful the affection is between Paul and his father! They neither like to be separated since their happy reunion."

"Yes, how was that? Did not Captain Noir disappear in some mysterious way?"

"No, dear; it was simply this. Finding his beloved son in the hands of his enemy, and being powerless to help him, he went on a long cruise, fearing if he did not do something he should go mad, kept away as long as he could, but, reading of Roland's death, came back, and had the great delight of having his son restored to him through Katie."

"Well, they have all suffered enough, and it is time they were happy. Talking of that,

Issie, did you ever see a more truly happy couple than Clara and George Manners. They are quite the nicest people I know."

"Yes, darling, and they owe it all to you. Good actions bring their own reward, and revenge recoils on the avenger."

Just a few more words, reader, and we shall have finished this story of revenge. In St. Jacques, dull, sandy St. Jacques, Pauline Weston has returned to drag out the remaining years of her ruined life. Jacqueline, ever faithful, is with her, with the same blind devotion of old. The beautiful Pauline is altered indeed, her golden hair has lost its lustre, and her splendid figure is thin and wan; but there are still enough traces left to show what a lovely creature she was, her health is shattered, and some days she is not able to take her accustomed walk, leaning on Jacqueline's arm, which is a great disappointment to the good people of St. Jacques, who never weary talking of the strange story connected with the tenant of the Chateau, it is only a very garbled version that has found its way here, and in it Pauline is converted into a martyr. Moreover, Alexandre, of course, has not lost the opportunity, and points out the form of the recluse as the victim of tyrants,

and the proof of the villainy of all existing powers as compared with the glorious people and the National Barber.

Lola has retired into a community of Sisters of Charity, and under the title of Sister Magdalen, strives by good works and devotion to atone for the evil she has done, and she has at last found peace, and sees the folly and wickedness of Revenge. Life is too short for the indulgence of such feelings, and she acknowledges with humility what awful results accrue from impiously usurping the prerogative of the Deity.

"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord."

THE END.

BILLING, PRINTER, GUILDFORD.